

919.8 S91 (2)
Streeter \$1.00
An Arctic rodeo

Acc. No. 740412

101267 | 16

919.8 S91 (2)
Keep Your Card in This Pocket

Books will be issued only on presentation of proper library cards.

Unless labeled otherwise, books may be retained for four weeks. Borrowers finding books marked, defaced or mutilated are expected to report same at library desk; otherwise the last borrower will be held responsible for all imperfections discovered.

The card holder is responsible for all books drawn on his card.

Penalty for over-due books 2c a day plus cost of notices.

Lost cards and change of residence must be reported promptly.



PUBLIC LIBRARY
Kansas City, Mo.

Keep Your Card in this Pocket

KANSAS CITY, MO. PUBLIC LIBRARY



0 0001 0167621 1



NONCHALANT YOUNG MAN BLOWS SMOKE RINGS AROUND THE ARCTIC CIRCLE.

A STAR BOOK

AN
ARCTIC RODEO

BY

DANIEL W. STREETER

Author of DENATURED
AFRICA, CAMELS



ILLUSTRATED

GARDEN CITY PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.

GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK

AN ARCTIC RODEO

~

Copyright, 1929

by

Daniel W. Streeter

Made in the United States of America

PREFACE

Here is the shortest journey ever recorded:

All our adventures were by the fireside and all our migrations from the blue bed to the brown.

THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD.

And here is the longest:

Farewell, good sirs! I am leaving for the future. I will wait for humanity at the crossroads three hundred years hence.

LUIGI LUCATELLI.

The Vicar's greatest dissipation was a glass of his wife's gooseberry wine. He led a good life, but missed a lot of adventure.

Lucatelli, on the other hand, was too ambitious. As a result he missed his appointment and nobody's seen him since.

It naturally follows that if one confines himself to the well defined middle path lying halfway be-

PREFACE

tween the blue bed, the brown bed and the cross-roads of the future, he will probably find adventure, but adventure tempered with sobriety. And that's about all most of us can hope for.

Just north of the brown bed and south of the crossroads lies Cape York, the beginning of what Admiral Peary has described as an Arctic Oasis. It is reached by cruising along the west coast of Greenland until one finds himself about eight hundred miles from the North Pole. Here is a journey that fulfills all the conditions.

Somebody has said that "Anyone fool enough to go to Greenland for pleasure would go to Hell for entertainment."

Nevertheless, Greenland is far more subtle than it sounds. Though the competition is great it stands out definitely as a land of paradox. For instance, it is almost entirely buried under a vast sheet of paleocrystic ice, yet palm trees, tulip trees, cycads and magnolias are plentiful. Of course they are fossils, but the digging is easy if you care to prove it.

In this Arctic Arcadia live the Smith Sound Eskimos, last of the world's aborigines. They live

PREFACE

exclusively on a diet of blood, blubber and meat. They have never seen a tree in their lives. Vegetables do not exist. In their case, a balanced diet consists of a strip of raw seal meat followed by a strip of blubber. Yet below the chest they never know a moment's illness. Where do they get Vitamin D?

That's one of the things we went to find out.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

PART I

*“Will you, won’t you, will you, won’t you,
won’t you join the dance?”*

CHAPTER I

When two men journey on an ass's back one must ride behind.

SANCHO PANZA.

I

BILLY the Cook knocked the dottle of tobacco out of his pipe with an air of finality. We were off! We were actually moving! As though preparing for a difficult vocal number, our Diesel engine had just burst into a violent fit of moist coughing. All was bustle and confusion leavened with a slight trace of chaos. Strange things were happening.

Someone handed us a rope's end: "Heave on that, you lubber," he said.

We hove. It was a splendid idea except the other end of the rope wasn't fastened to anything. We passed it on to a confrère with the hoarse command: "Push on that, you polyp," and moved to a more sequestered part of the deck.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

The thought of sailing away on a Banks fishing schooner to probe the silent places filled us with a strange excitement. It was an entirely new experience saturated with glamor and romance. As far as Billy the Cook was concerned, however, his actions were more eloquent than words. After clearing his well scarred cutty pipe of all undesirable material he stowed it, still warm, in a trouser pocket and proceeded to sink through the forecastle hatch as though in the clutches of an irresistible suction.

His whole attitude suggested bored resignation. We were heading for Baffin Bay, North Greenland and Eskimos! Yet the fact left him in a glacial condition. He was about to spend the summer with a semi-scientific expedition the members of which were swollen with erudition. Yet no visible evidence of high blood pressure or deranged metabolism was noticeable on his part. He was emotionally insolvent.

The moment arrived when nothing remained of Billy the Cook but his head. Body and breeches he had been swallowed by the forecastle hatch until all that was left of him was a Napoleonic brow and

AN ARCTIC RODEO

pair of eyes resembling small globes of tourmaline. The eyes wandered. First toward an aeroplane that circled above us, then to the high speed motor boats darting about with the futility of a brood of water bugs and finally came to rest on a point of rocks a few hundred yards away. There, dressed in flamboyant Highland costumes, Pat O'Farrell and a couple of fellow Hibernians were putting real pressure on their bagpipes. If they had been performing a coronach over our dead bodies they couldn't have groaned and skirled with more zest.

Now all that was visible of Billy was his hat, and as though unable to restrain himself longer he proceeded to talk through it, though there was a subterranean quality to his voice that commanded attention.

“A Hell of a start off for an Arctic Expedition and no mistake!” he rumbled. “Lobster salad! Bagpipes! What the —” Gravity suddenly won out. He vanished completely.

He may have been right. Possibly bagpipers on such an occasion were effeminate. Yet they formed a vivid splash of color against their rocky background, and as we drew out into Long Island

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Sound their banshee cries were just enough to remind us we were not sailing north entirely for pleasure. They chastened the spirit.

However, we were quite unprepared to rise to the defense of the bagpipe as an aid to Arctic research, in fact even the exact status of the lobster salad was a dark mystery as far as we were concerned. It takes longer than a week to convert one into a Viking of the Ice, and that was just a week longer than we had been working at it. Anyway, such things were George's funeral, for he was the Expedition's father, mother and wet nurse.

George was a business man—even worse, he was a Publisher, and if that does not express the quintessence of depravity—he was a Publisher with a chronic wanderlust. His was a triple personality. One may expect anything in a case like this and rarely be disappointed. His sanctuary successfully combined a deep monastic calm with the brazen atmosphere of a boiler factory. Yet the only bait that had been needed to lure us into it was a telephone call. He sat against a desk in an attitude at once expressive of deep abstraction and alert interest. There was no prologue.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

“I’m organizing an Expedition to Greenland,” he said. “There are to be fourteen of us and an ichthyologist. Our object is to collect for the American Museum a few narwhals, white whales (or did he say whitebait), local sharks, artifacts, odds and ends—” The telephone bell rang. He took up the instrument, speaking into it with meticulous accuracy.

“Yes—yes—YES! NO!” That concluded the telephone conversation.

“Where was I? Sargasso Sea? The Arctic? Oh! yes! We’ll touch at Sydney, then make for Greenland, follow the coast north to Cape York and Etah, call on the Smith Sound Eskimo—the last of the world’s aborigines—” The telephone bell rang.

“No—No—NO! Yes.” It was a fine example of Ciceronian eloquence.

“Aborigines? Hum, aborigines. We’re making the trip on a hundred foot ‘banker’ owned by Bob Bartlett and manned by a crew of those silent men from Newfoundland one reads about—six of them. The kind of men who’ve been running away from home and going to sea ever since they were

AN ARCTIC RODEO

children. Take a letter, Miss Berger." The letter, a composition full of phantasy, consisting of three words besides the address, does not concern this history.

"Now a word as to the personnel of the Expedition. Besides myself and Captain Bartlett, there will be a Radio Operator, Pathé News representative, Montana Cowboy, Bow and Arrow Expert, Engineer, Cabin Boy, Zoologist, Taxidermist and Famous Danish Explorer—he will join us in Greenland."

"Don't forget the ichthy fellow," we reminded him. "And you've overlooked a flammenwerfer, osteopath and first class mortician."

"It does sound a little like an Arctic Rodeo," he admitted. "Now here's the point. I was taking an Artist to paint Northern backgrounds. He's blown up on me. Will you take his place?"

"Certainly," we answered, "but not as a painter because we don't paint and someone might notice it."

"There's a thought there," he mused. "Well, suggest something so ambiguous no matter how bad you are no one will notice it."

AN ARCTIC RODEO

The rating of "Hunter" was finally agreed on and we stepped into the street indentured for the summer to a hundred foot fishing schooner bound for the roof of the world.

II

Her name was the *Effie M. Morrissey*—name enough for a battleship almost; her age was thirty-four years; the place of her nativity, Essex, Massachusetts; her youth, while it had not been misspent, had obviously been arduous; throughout, her skeleton and planking was fashioned of oak that harked back to the days when the phrase "wooden ship and iron men" was a fact rather than a poetic fancy; an outer sheathing of "green-heart" was designed to protect her somewhat from the ice. Three decades of scuffling sea boots had worn her decks into strange grooves and mysterious hollows, while the ghosts of countless generations of codfish were her constant companions. Ships are said to possess personalities. Hers was strong to the point of eccentricity.

We were fortunate in making the acquaintance

AN ARCTIC RODEO

of the schooner and the Skipper simultaneously. Just as we arrived, someone in a moment of lassitude had dropped a keg of formaldehyde into the hold. It burst. With the single exception of the Skipper the entire Expedition was suffering from partial asphyxiation. Therefore he was talking for everybody. And he did it successfully too, using colorful language in a way that made it sound like music. His uvula was obviously in the pink of condition, and there wasn't a knock in either tonsil. He was a darling.

For an hour the ship was so whiffy nobody cared to get anywhere near her, so we induced the Taxidermist to draw a picture of her interior on a pine board. It seems there was a combination forecastle and galley, sort of a boudoir-kitchenette containing six very narrow bunks for the crew, a table and stove. Then came a store-room, followed by the main hold, which formerly had served as a mausoleum for dead cod, and now by a strange irony of fate was to house twelve members of the Expedition in two tiers of bunks. Except for a corner given over to the wireless, the dining table occupied most of the remaining

AN ARCTIC RODEO

space. Next came the fifty-seven horse-power Diesel engine and a storeroom for specimens to be acquired later. A small door about three feet high led into the after-cabin, which was furnished with six bunks, a table, one chair and a very strong odor of bilge. There was also a wash-hand basin, small stove and storage spaces under the floor and in the overhang of the stern. Maybe they're called "lazarets"; on the other hand maybe they aren't. It doesn't matter.

So much for the schooner. The Skipper is a more intricate subject. For all his simple manners and homely conversation his notice in "Who's Who" is so long it sounds like a Congressional roll call. He is the outstanding ice navigator of our day and could boast of having been nearer to that geographical figment known as the "North Pole," with dogs and sledges, than any living white man—but doesn't. No one contributed more to the ultimate winning of the Pole by Admiral Peary and refers to it less.

But a few bluff sentences from the Skipper's own log¹ come pretty near telling his story: "As I

¹ *The Log of Bob Bartlett*—a tasty morsel.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

was the eldest son my Mother resolved that I should enter the ministry. . . . But the spirit of my fathers was in my blood. The sea was calling me." And so an embryo prelate who would have packed a lusty wallop in each fist was lost to the ministry.

Yet the sea proved to be but a shrewish mistress. "I have been shipwrecked twelve times," he confesses. "Four times I have seen my own ship sink or be crushed to kindling wood against the rocks. Yet I love the sea as a dog loves its master who clouts it for the discipline of the house."

Women never entered his life: "I never got married. I don't think a seafaring man ought to because women so often break your heart." Then he tells of a fisherman he knew who got shipwrecked one winter on the Labrador and left his wife in a snow dugout while he went to the nearest village for food. "When he got back to his wife he found the dogs had eaten her. He never got over the shock, which shows what a care and sorrow a woman can be under some circumstances." All of which partially explains the Skipper's feelings toward the *Effie M. Morrissey*. They were

AN ARCTIC RODEO

more than platonic. She filled him with salty rapture.

III

If our schooner's general appearance of confusion was any criterion, it must follow that next to bringing an expedition home intact, probably the hardest thing in the world is getting it under way. Obviously, the idea is to pack everything away in such order that each object automatically reveals itself when needed. Yet the attempt generally results in chaos—at least it closely resembled our idea of chaos. But then ours was the viewpoint of the land-lubber.

At length the *Morrissey* was loaded to the Plimsoll line with everything from trade goods to fuel oil, food and equipment. The vessel suffered from such a surfeit of cargo that it oozed from her hatches and submerged the deck like an inundation. Now we were ready to start. The dramatic moment had arrived. Three thousand miles to the North the Smith Sound Eskimo undoubtedly held walrus barbecues and blubber pulls unconscious of

AN ARCTIC RODEO

what the future held in store. It was just as well.

We parted from our moorings at Staten Island without the encouragement of trumpets and drums. Simplicity was the keynote. Mr. Mac-Williams, owner of the dry dock, yelled, "Are you all ready, Captain Bartlett?" It was more than a yell, it was a bellow; the kind of thing usually blamed on a sea lion with a rough throat.

We awaited the Skipper's answer with tense interest. "Now we'll hear something really rau-cous," we promised ourselves, "the yell of a hard-boiled Master Mariner about to return to his na-tive element."

The whole thing was a bitter disappointment. Though his face was red enough and he opened his mouth wide enough to satisfy the most fastid-i-ous realist, all he said was, "Cast off!" in a high, flutelike warble.

"How in the world could anybody hear him in a gale?" we asked the Taxidermist.

"There's nothing the matter with his lungs," he reassured us. "He's just full of emotion."

A tug attached itself to us with a hairy tentacle of sisal, and dragged us without ceremony over

AN ARCTIC RODEO

the oily waters of the Kill van Kull. The plant of a Gargantuan refining company belched forth dense clouds of unctuous black smoke. On we went. The harbor with its helter-skelter traffic swallowed us up. We passed several liners, complacent in appearance and full of vermillion-nosed dignity. The tips of our masts did not even reach their promenade decks. Against their vast bulk the *Morrissey* appeared about the size of a half-smoked cigar. This was depressing.

“She looks small now,” the Skipper soothed us, “but the farther north we get the larger she’ll look. At Cape York you’ll think she’s the *Leviathan*”; which prophecy was received and filed. On we went.

The skyline of New York looked down on us sardonically; above us hung airy spans that leapt across the East River. They vibrated to ceaseless traffic. As we passed Bedloe Island some people waved to us.

“Who are they?” we enquired.

“Some of the guests, probably,” the Taxidermist volunteered. “That’s where they keep the dips, bugs, thugs and lunatics.”

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Our departure seemed to strike a sympathetic chord in their breasts.

On we went through the perils of Hell Gate and into the Sound. At Execution Rock our tug left us. We did not grieve overmuch—it wasn't a very nice tug anyway. For the first time the Diesel engine was started. It coughed, spluttered, gurgled a few times, then broke into the rhythmical staccato pinging that we soon came to regard as a soothing melody. Off we went to four bells and a jingle.

Now surely we have cast off the shackles of civilization. It is almost our moral duty at this point to snap into a brutal fight on the moonlit deck over a girl. There is no justification for the anæmic events that follow except that's the way it worked out. We got as far as Rye, N. Y., and anchored in a bed of sardine tins just off the American Yacht Club.

Early the next morning all hands were called to repel sightseers. They came off in anything that would float. They climbed the rigging, they felt everything over to see if they could get it loose, they got into wet paint and then tried out our



HER NAME WAS THE *Effie M. Morrissey*; HER YOUTH, WHILE IT HAD NOT BEEN MISSPENT, HAD OBVIOUSLY BEEN ARDUOUS.





UNMARRIED WOMEN BANDED THEIR TOPKNOTS WITH RED RIBBON; MARRIED WOMEN WITH BLUE; WIDOWS USED BLACK, AND THOSE FALLING INTO NONE OF THE ABOVE CATEGORIES, GREEN.

“—anyhow there's no excuse for a fellow committing a social error up here unless he's color blind,” mused the taxidermist.



AN ARCTIC RODEO

bunks. At noon there was a lunch at the Yacht Club—there always is. Many notables were present—there always are. A covey of our relatives arrived on the wing to cheer us on our way. With drawn faces they stood around us in a ring. If we had taken a prone position it would have been very difficult to separate the quick from the dead. A venerable Aunt looked as though the heat was going to get her.

Commodore Mallory presented the Skipper with a dropsical cake four feet in diameter. Departing Explorers are always given a very large cake. It is symbolical of something. Ours even tasted symbolical—as though it might have been made from dinosaur eggs.

As we returned to the schooner the parting words of a well-known Arctic Explorer suddenly flashed through our minds. "I cannot keep myself from realizing," he wrote, "that I and those with me are embarking on a dangerous journey of uncertain duration and that we may never return." The I's seemed to have it. There was a very sinister ring to the speech nevertheless.

"For Heaven's sake, let's go," said George.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

“Heave anchor!” yelled the Skipper. Without further ceremony he jerked the bells—they always “jerk the bells.” Slowly we began to move—and just at this point Billy the Cook knocked the dottle of tobacco out of his pipe. It was the 20th of June.

CHAPTER II

*Oh, here's to the land where you stick to your chairs,
Where the beds do not fire you out unawares,
Where you know which is down and which is upstairs—
A health to the land, Yo ho!*

Tom Ybarra.

I

LONG ISLAND SOUND was at its best. The snow-white sails of aristocratic pleasure yachts flashed in the distance; steamers more plebeian in appearance sped nervously up and down, while here and there grimy barge-like affairs slunk away as though conscious of the fact that their pedigrees could probably be summed up in the phrase: "out of Fall River by two tugs."

For a short distance a few motor boats followed us, then one by one disappeared; the huge gas tank that stands out as the most prominent architectural feature of Rye, N. Y., sank below the hori-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

zon and suddenly we realized that our familiar world had vanished. We were sailing along all by ourselves very much involved in an elaborate sunset. For a minute or two the Cabin Boy appeared to be having difficulty with his Adam's Apple, but then at fourteen who hasn't? As a matter of fact, we all stood around and gazed with studied carelessness in the general direction of Manhattan Island. It was rather an emotional moment. Then we went below for tea. That broke the tension. Billy's tea would change anybody's trend of thought.

When we came on deck again a very rotund moon hung suspended in the sky. Occasionally Sound steamers flitted by, bright with lights, and once ever so faintly the sound of music drifted over the water.

We grouped ourselves around the wheel in the moonlight and talked of far countries. The Archer spoke of Alaska; the Zoologist of Borneo and Tasmania—sometimes one at a time, sometimes both at once. He was quite broadminded about it. The Ichthyologist frankly favored the Caribbean, and that sounded like a good place for his

AN ARCTIC RODEO

type of work—whatever it was. Personally, we sang of Africa and golden joys. The Cowboy whipped out a harmonica, and, after suggesting that the greatest metropolis anywhere in or around the earth was Billings, Montana, cut a couple of hoe cakes on it—the harmonica. We never hope to travel further at less expense, or hear more facts manufactured on the spur of the moment. And yet the glamor of that night still lingers in the memory and causes the blood to move a little faster. The prophecy of adventure was in the air; the commonplace world had dropped below the horizon—so we thought.

Our bunk was in the after-cabin, on the starboard side, just at the entrance to the engine room. When passing in a hurry it was an ideal place in which to deposit undesired knickknacks. As time went on, it became a matter of great interest to us to see what the harvest would be at bed time. We might turn in on top of a loaded shotgun, or again it might be nothing more vicious than a nest full of very tired eider duck eggs. We always expected the worst and generally got it.

The first night there were no shotguns, how-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

ever. We lay in our blankets and listened to the ship. It was certainly talking, but in a language all its own. From the way it creaked and gurgled something was tickling its oaken ribs. It seemed to be laughing up the nautical equivalent of its sleeve, and unless our ears deceived us there was just a trace of derision in its liquid mirth. Then we knew no more.

When Billy called us at 7 A.M. we were just passing Block Island. At breakfast everybody had something to say between mouthfuls of shredded wheat about what a wonderful run we'd made. It was wonderful. We'd covered the first ninety miles of the three thousand to Cape York.

The morning that followed was full of activity. Each member of the Expedition seemed to feel that the time had come to unlimber his own particular accessories. So the Scientists sat on the after-deck sharpening bloodthirsty shark hooks and harpoons; the Archer waxed his bow strings; the Cowboy practiced fancy loops with a short rope; the Doctor polished up some surgical instruments more vicious looking than the shark hooks; the Wireless Operator went around with a lantern

AN ARCTIC RODEO

searching for static; Pathé News rushed about asking everybody to "Hold it." Everyone was doing that for which he was best fitted, so George and I rearranged the cargo in the overhang of the stern—and we kept on rearranging it until it was reduced to a chaos that lasted the rest of the voyage.

Then, while we had our hands in, we arranged a system for the transmission and reception of all radio messages. It was quite elaborate and had so many good points you could hang your hat on them. It lasted twenty-four hours.

II

At noon we passed Gay Head. Everybody gathered at the rail and tried to spot Eskimos on the beach. This sounds unreasonable. It is unreasonable, but New York was beginning to look pretty far south.

The end of a peaceful afternoon found us off the Stone Horse and Pollack Rip Lightship. As we slipped past it into the Gulf of Maine, a dilapidated three-masted schooner was wallowing in towards Boston. It was a sorry piece of antiquity with a depraved look, evidently kept afloat by

AN ARCTIC RODEO

force of circumstances. Yet it was our last contact with the world for the next three days. The ocean was all ours. It stretched away in the sunset to the edge of an earth devoid of life. Our privacy was complete.

That night when we turned in there was a book in our bunk, among other things. It belonged to the Zoologist. Nobody else would own such a book. It was called "The Science of Anthropometry," and unfolded the science of measuring the human body. It seems that by taking the geometrical dimensions of an individual's salient points, and comparing them with a table of logarithms, you can at once tell to what branch of the human family he belongs. For instance, take a negro, measure him, refer to the tables and if you haven't made an error you will find he falls under the column labeled "Negroid." One little misplaced logarithm, however, and the man might turn out to be a Lapp or Chinaman. It was a great comfort to know about a book like this.

When Billy went through the formality of rousing us, the schooner was smashing into blue waves capped with foaming white crests. She would

AN ARCTIC RODEO

“butt into a sea two or three times and then go round it,” taking more weird positions doing it than one would believe possible. Neptune was writhing. There were racks on the mess room table, and even its heavy load of prunes, fried pork, beans, coffee and raisin bread failed to induce some of the Explorers to separate themselves from their bunks.

This grieved Billy. Not that he cared if the whole expedition became bunk-ridden, but it took much of the pleasure out of calling us in the morning. His method of wooing us from sleep was more of a ritual than a summons. At the door of the after-cabin he invariably paused, removed his hat, thoroughly moistened his hand with saliva, slicked down his forelock tight against his forehead, then stepped into the middle of the floor and broke the bad news. Fair weather or foul, the procedure never varied, but it must have been discouraging to slick the forelock for nothing.

We spent the next two days cavorting about in the Bay of Fundy with our scuppers awash. One evening we ran into a school of finback whales. They were chasing a vast shoal of small fish and

AN ARCTIC RODEO

giving the matter their undivided attention. Before they saw us and sounded, one stood up on his tail and did a pirouette. It was a complete and brazen exposure. He might have been twenty feet long. He might have been most any length. We have never seen more fish all in one piece.

III

The strange case of the Ichthyologist now began to attract our attention. It had never been our good fortune to reach terms of intimacy with an Ichthyologist before, and for a while we were frankly puzzled. What was he? He might be a skin specialist, but we knew it was much more serious than that. Then, by keeping our ears open, we discovered the truth and concealed our ignorance. It seemed he was an amphibious character who believed that "nature's greatest tribute to motherhood was shadroe." We at once pictured him calling mermaids by their first names and tearing the veil off the family life of the shrimp. To such a man the deeps of the sea will be home, we reflected. He is the Little Father of the Cod and

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Haddock and never wrings the salt water out of his mittens.

Yet we barely cleared Long Island Sound before he became violently seasick, staggered to his bunk and was seen no more for four days. We were anchored at Sydney Harbor when he finally came up for air. At this point he received a mysterious telegram saying: "Come home at once." He might have sent it to himself, but it isn't likely. He didn't look as though he had strength enough to hold a pencil.

He left us. And there we were, obliged to head for the Arctic without an Ichthyologist. It was most embarrassing. What would the fish think of us? The way it all turned out, however, proves that a benevolent Providence generally guides our destinies, for when we finally reached our particular section of the Polar regions we found there weren't any fish. An Ichthyologist would have been a nuisance to himself even. So it was all for the best. But all this is anticipating somewhat.

While we were wallowing along off Cape Breton we received our baptism of fog. It was a dun colored, ponderable fog that shrouded us like a

AN ARCTIC RODEO

winding sheet—a damp, very badly laundried winding sheet. It was the kind of fog “you could stick your finger into and when you pulled it out it would come out with a pop.” A Banks schooner of such dimensions one can cover the distance from the wheel to the end of the bowsprit in a dozen jumps is not the most cheerful place in the world to be in a fog. Everything becomes spectral. Even the fog horn groans, especially if it is one of the small boxes worked with a hand lever usually carried by “bankers.” The range of noises they are capable of is amazing. With very little encouragement they will purr like an “angel half full of pie” or groan like a fiend full of misery, while at times one may pump the lever for several minutes with nothing happening. This doesn’t mean anything. The bellows are merely storing up wind. They will let go all of a sudden when you are thinking of something else and scare you half to death. Yet if a steamer heard it fifty yards away it could be put down to a miracle.

When the fog rose we were just passing Framboise Cove, a good juicy name. Then came Guion Light, which was followed by a place called Sca-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

tari and lastly Commandiere Light. Now we were only thirty miles from Sydney. The sunset was wild, the scene turbulent. The breakers spouted jets of spray high into the air as they crashed against the rocky coast.

We cast anchor off North Sydney at 2 A. M. on the 25th. New York lay nine hundred miles behind us. From this point on we ceased looking backward.

CHAPTER III

The man who invented the cuckoo clock is dead. This is old news, but in other respects there is nothing the matter with it.

M. TWAIN.

I

MOST expeditions about to follow what is known as the “American Route” to the Pole stop at Sydney. It’s the first leg of the journey; the natural place to pick up such items of the Arctic trousseau as have been forgotten, and it has a rail connection with New York. At this point the Explorer may either abandon hope and dive into the unknown, or take the train back to the flesh pots. With the exception of the Ichthyologist we all abandoned hope.

It was a radiant morning. The *Morrissey* was anchored on the fringe of a small fleet of weather-beaten fishing schooners. All was serene and peaceful. We were going through the single mo-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

tion which constituted dressing for breakfast, when down the companionway came a stark, blood-curdling noise. It sounded as though someone was meeting death by the primitive method of strangulation. There was a bubbling flow of incoherence. It became clearer, finally emerging as a pellucid stream of incandescent invective delivered by a master. Fecundity of ideas and vitality of expression at once rated it as a *Summa Cum Laude* effort. The situation seemed full of promise and yet, as so often happens, its fulfillment resulted in nothing more than froth. The Skipper had only mistaken a tube of cold cream for his favorite dentifrice.

The incident would hardly be worth mentioning except for the fact that it emphasizes the inconsistencies of human nature. Here was a man who had lived for weeks on rancid seal blubber, walrus ribs long past redemption, frozen dog meat and leather moccasins chopped up and brought to a boil, rebelling at a small dose of cold cream. It was hard to understand.

We spent the day ashore washing, eating and doing errands. The errands were more or less de-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

pressing, for North Sydney, like Mark Antony, seemed to be slowly dying. As an aftermath of the war, the coal and iron mines which supplied its life's blood had gone bankrupt, leaving the town three sizes too large for its population and the population much too dense for the floating supply of currency.

At the wharf of one of the largest fish commission merchants we watched two moist, scaly human beings unload their morning's catch from a small fishing boat. They received two and one-half cents a pound for cod and haddock. A lot of good-sized fish were thrown to one side. They had no commercial value, it seemed, weighing only six or eight pounds apiece. The fishermen could take them or leave them—nobody cared. They gave most of them away. If things went well, we were told, and they didn't go to the bottom in a gale, these fishermen could make from twelve to fourteen dollars a week. If they were lucky they got the cost of the bait back.

We were glad to return to the ship that evening. Compared to the town it seemed like a small prosperous Paradise. The Chief Engineer and Cowboy

AN ARCTIC RODEO

had spent the day removing carbon from the Diesel engine. The supply must have been inexhaustible, for they were as black as a pair of ravens. It had even worked through their clothes. In fact when we entered the mess room the Cowboy was in the act of scaling carbon from his teeth with a chisel. "I noticed at supper time," he explained, "that my compression was very weak."

The next time we saw that chisel being exercised on a molar was at Parker Snow Bay about eight hundred miles from the Pole. Ralph the sailor was laid out on the oilcloth of the mess room table, the Zoologist was feeding him chloroform through a cone made of a bunch of waste, while the Doctor with the chisel and a hammer he had borrowed from the engine room was removing a wisdom tooth and small section of jawbone that was of no further value. The operation was a great success. In three days the patient could work his jaws as well as ever, but the engine room force had posted a notice reading, "Tools must not be removed from engine room." It seems the Chief had spent twenty minutes looking for the chisel while the Doctor was using it and naturally was a little

AN ARCTIC RODEO

put out. "If everybody's going to help themselves to our tools," he complained, "just when there's a big emergency and I want the Stilson wrench quick I'll find the Doc's using it to remove someone's appendix."

II

Because of its effect on Billy the Cook it's almost necessary to mention the full moon that swung up over the horizon at Sydney. It was large and mellow and tinged with red; it cast a romantic spell over the harbor and quiescent fishing fleet. Whatever sordidness or signs of penury might have been visible by day vanished under its magic.

Even Billy fell under the influence of its beams, and when he stepped over the side, bound for shore leave, his eye glittered with high purpose. There were twelve dollars in his pocket. The world was before him. He had been transformed from High Priest of the Galley Range into a Paladin. He reached the main thoroughfare and exchanged the twelve dollars for two quarts of rum simultaneously, assisted in the act by a hard-looking individual whose understanding of humanity was

AN ARCTIC RODEO

positively clairvoyant. Jim and Joe, sailors from the schooner, now appeared on the scene like a pair of beagles about to give tongue. One gurgle from the package beneath Billy's arm and they not only started baying, but developed a solicitous regard for him that would have touched a heart of stone. They decided unanimously to show him a quiet spot where rum could be consumed with the ceremony to which it was entitled. Joe carried it. No, indeed! Good old Billy wasn't going to be allowed to do any work! Jim hooked his arm through Joe's as the sidewalks were very crowded. And that was the last Billy saw of them. They vanished like a dream. By the time he located them again the rum was only a memory, which was kept alive and verdant by frequent whiffs of the corks they considerately returned to him.

Shortly after this Jim and Joe decided that the middle of the street would be an excellent place to take a nap; there was a slight argument with the municipal authorities, which the authorities won handily, and both sides disappeared into the night in the direction of the local jail.

The rest of the evening Billy the Cook spent de-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

scribing the felony in crisp, nervous prose to anyone who would listen. He never completely recovered from the blow, and weeks later would get off in a corner and mutter to himself. Everyone let him alone then, for they knew he was in the clutches of a great sorrow.

We lay over an extra day at Sydney. George had agreed to ferry a small expedition over to Holstenborg, Greenland, and they were to join us here. It was an erudite little group, four professors and two assistants. They were convinced that most of the bad weather in the world was manufactured on the Ice Cap of Greenland and exported in bulk deliveries to the North Atlantic and Buffalo, New York. Their idea was to spend the summer studying this vast refrigerator, and inasmuch as the sheet of ice covering the surface of Greenland is about seven hundred and ten thousand square miles in area they would obviously be obliged to treat the subject in a large, care-free manner. Their leader, a lean hungry-looking man of sixty, was one of the world's foremost glaciologists. There was nothing else one could hold against him.

While we were waiting for all this learning to

AN ARCTIC RODEO

arrive George headed a little side expedition up an estuary in an attempt to catch some sea trout and film a small scenario that was running through his mind. The Cabin Boy, Archer, Cowboy and Pathé News accompanied him. They took enough properties to film the "Birth of the Nation." They returned at the end of the day with nothing to show but a pail of clams—soft clams. It was one of the most extraordinary cases of big expectations and microscopic results we have ever come in contact with. The sea trout, it seems, had disappeared without leaving a permanent address—according to George—while the scenario was abandoned because the outstanding scenic fact of the region was mud. George discovered this by diving into it, and in digging him out the pail of clams was produced as a by-product. So even the tangible results of the expedition were accidental.

The Professors arrived somehow, and were rowed off to the schooner with their baggage. Now our decks really became a labyrinth. A heterogeneous collection of supplies and equipment littered them. Fifty iron drums of fuel oil, boxes of gasoline, coils of rope, flitches of bacon, lumber and

AN ARCTIC RODEO

strips of narrow iron for the Eskimos—sleds and runners in the raw; a nest of dories, an eighteen foot launch, a canoe belonging to the Professors and a tin boat they had purchased from Sears Roe-buck. This last item gave rise to considerable sarcastic comment on the part of Billy the Cook. “A tin boat in the Arctic!” he jeered. “A nice sharp cake of ice will act on it like a can opener. If it was dragged up on the front lawn they could grow geraniums in it. That’s the only good that could ever come out of a boat like that.” The Pro-fessors were persuaded. It was finally left on the dock.

III

At eleven o’clock on June twenty-seventh we chantied up the anchor and headed for Holsten-borg, Greenland, fifteen hundred miles away.

The weather, as we wallowed out of Sydney Harbor, must have been of the brand known as “dirty,” for it consisted of equal parts of drizzling rain and clammy fog. A few hours after starting, the engine was stopped while the Chief tore off the air pump and removed an accumulation of foreign

AN ARCTIC RODEO

matter. Then we wallowed with a vengeance—four directions at once. “I move we make this motion unanimous,” suggested the Cowboy. There were no seconders.

At sundown we were cutting across Cabot Strait, through which the St. Lawrence finds its way into the North Atlantic. We must have traveled through some kind of tide rip, for the waves reared many feet above our low deck and pursued us like hungry satyrs. Yet in every case, experienced nymph that she was, the *Effie M. Morrissey* eluded them successfully.

CHAPTER IV

The two pleasantest days of a sea voyage are the day before you sail and the day you land.

THE LAND CRAB.

I

WE spent the day coasting along the fore-shore of Newfoundland. The only remarkable thing about the landscape was its discouraged look. Its contours were gentle and rolling to be sure, but they were clothed with a luxuriant growth of nakedness, and as for the soil it wouldn't even have supported a lawsuit.

Every time we enquired our position the answer was, "Just off the Bay of Islands." We were hours passing it. The thing seemed more like a serious interruption than a Bay. There was only one consolation. We now found time to catch up on our reading. There was rather a complete Arctic library aboard into which we recklessly plunged. It turned out to be cheery material. There was the

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Last Cruise of the Karluk. She was crushed in ice. The *Last Cruise of the Miranda*. She ran onto a rock. *From the Deep of the Sea* was the story of a total loss. *Moby Dick* was a disaster set to the music of mysticism. *Dr. Kane's Arctic Explorations* were filled with descriptions of scurvy so realistic a few pages of it gave one the feeling his teeth were about to drop out. This course of reading definitely established two points—the successful explorer apparently always swims home, and arrives in a lisping condition of toothlessness.

According to the flyleaf the Skipper had been co-author of *The Last Cruise of the Karluk*. It was hard to imagine him in the throes of literary composition, so to satisfy ourselves we stepped on deck and faced him with the evidence.

“It was me,” he admitted.

“How many copies were sold?”

“About six thousand.”

“There must have been some sweet royalties.”

“I never asked.”

“Didn’t the Publishers give you an accounting?”

“Sure. It said I owed them two hundred dollars.”

AN ARCTIC RODEO

“You sold six thousand copies and owed them two hundred dollars!”

“They said I gave too many away and maybe they were right. Every time I went out to dinner and sat next to a good looking girl I gave her a book—and a fellow wouldn’t believe there were so many good looking girls in the world.”

“Did you ever pay the two hundred?”

“Hell, no. I let the Publishers charge it up to experience.”

Regardless of who paid for it an uncertainty always lingered in our mind as to just who got the experience.

That evening, looking thoroughly inflamed, the sun sank into a dense bank of laminated grey clouds. It was a fitting climax to the course of reading we had just taken.

In the east a thunderstorm was coming to a head. Long streaks of forked lightning were ripping the heavens apart, while the little light remaining might be described as ghostly. The brooding stillness was heavy with the threat of harrowing events. With the abruptness usual in such cases the catastrophe broke. Someone, on a distant fishing

AN ARCTIC RODEO

schooner, started playing a cornet solo, each note of which was carefully felt for, hit over the head and knocked unconscious. Now, even if it is good, a thunderstorm is no place for a cornet solo, yet here was a fellow snapping sharps and flats into the gloom, absolutely indifferent to the fact that any instant he might be struck by lightning. He was courting death. The night grew more tenebrous; the thunder muttered and rumbled. The cornetist now apparently reached the conclusion that he was the Angel Gabriel. He began to depend on sheer lung power; his tongue work went all to pieces; evidently he had made up his mind to drown out the thunder and wake the dead if he burst a whole network of blood-vessels doing it. Then the rain came and drowned everything out. The cornet gave a couple of liquid bleats and was heard no more. It was not a flippant performance. In fact, it was one of the most depressing thunderstorms we have ever been in. The next moment its full force burst upon us. The thunder rolled and crashed with deafening reverberations. The scene was tempestuous, awe-inspiring.

There may have been irony in the fact that we

AN ARCTIC RODEO

had "bubble and squeak" for supper that night. It sounds noisy; just the kind of food one should eat during a thunderstorm, yet it is a simple dish with absolutely no harm in it unless you happen to run onto a sliver of wood or stove bolt unexpectedly. In fact, its composition is almost childish —merely beans, potatoes, carrots and turnips, mashed up together and thoroughly boiled and stirred. The result is a curious polychromatic looking substance with absolutely no sense of humor.

The thunder grew fainter, yet the night was still full of music for we sat around and explored our "bubble and squeak" to the sound of the drumming rain. It was falling in torrents, which beat a rataplan on the deck, then silently eased into the mess room by way of its brand-new skylight.

"That skylight doesn't fit," one of the Meteorologists remarked, and the world was the richer for another great truth.

Now the storm was sounding a retreat. Far down the horizon it muttered and fussed, merely an echo of its former ferocity. It was over. One had every right to expect peace and quiet. But

AN ARCTIC RODEO

now the ship's orchestra started right in where the thunder left off and the noise began all over again.

It was only an unpretentious four-piece affair, but it had guts—if the expression is proper. The Archer played first violin. He had built himself an instrument along original lines. It was played like a violin, but looked like a policeman's night stick, the object being to contrive something that could be used for self-defense and yet would pack away easily when on safari. Pathé News played second fiddle. The Cowboy twanged a banjo, while we plucked a kind of lute with a strong nasal accent purchased at Rye, New York, for \$2.36. One thing always puzzled us about this orchestra. Individually we were not bad; collectively we were rotten. It was hard to explain, unless it was because none of us were accustomed to mass production.

Suddenly, bang in the middle of a very difficult number, the Operator burst in with a radio message: "Belle Isle Straits clear of ice, but plenty of growlers," it read. The concert was over. What was a "growler"? That was the problem that con-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

cerned us now. We were getting down to realities. The authorities were consulted.

Growlers it seemed were nothing but small, half-submerged bergs of blue ice. Blue ice was as tough as steel. While they sounded harmless, it was just as unpleasant to collide with a growler as a large, majestic iceberg. In either case apparently the results were identical—their size became only a matter of academic interest. The North was closing in on us.

At noon next day we weathered Cape Ferrolle and entered the Straits of Belle Isle. The wind whistled into our teeth, and there was a snap to it suggestive of vast frozen solitudes. "I smell ice," Sailor Joe remarked, drawing about a cubic yard of the gale in through dilated nostrils, like a connoisseur.

The Strait is only eleven miles wide just here, which gives one a vague feeling of being landlocked until he notices the wreck of a large steamer just off the Cape when the vagueness entirely disappears and the feeling becomes definite. It was a very suggestive traffic signal. A short distance from its rusty hull lay a stranded iceberg—our first. It

AN ARCTIC RODEO

was small, ugly and smeared with mud, yet to us it seemed a crystalline marvel.

II

With land on either hand we ran on until twilight. Then suddenly huge bergs towered all about us. We seemed to be wending our way through the silent deserted streets of a floating city, the architecture of which was the result of a deranged intellect. They had weathered into an infinite variety of shapes and their coloration was a delirium. A Byzantine palace covered with pinnacles, minarets and domes might rub elbows with a severe Greek temple of white marble set off with fluted columns. Here was a fair replica of Grant's Tomb and the Albert Memorial, squeezing between them the Taj Mahal done with a mother-of-pearl finish. Brown-stone fronts jostled Japanese pagodas that glistened as though stuccoed with jewels. Everything was done on a grand scale, regardless of expense. Aside from their poetic significance these bergs rose fifty to seventy-five feet above the water, which gave them an over-all height of from four

AN ARCTIC RODEO

hundred to six hundred feet. In bulk they represented millions of tons of ice.

That night we lay in our berth and wondered what the harvest would be. We were forging ahead at full speed through this maze of floating mausoleums. Sooner or later we were bound to smack one. How could we help it? Through the three inches of oak planking that separated us from the Labrador Current the water thirstily gurgled and lapped. It sounded much too frolicsome. "Here's where we wake up and find a mermaid twining seaweed in our hair," we promised ourself.

Yet, the next thing we knew Billy the Cook was standing in the doorway applying saliva to his forelock. It was breakfast time. We were still afloat. The sea nymphs had been cheated by the telescopic eyesight of the Newfoundland lookouts. A heavy fog surrounded us. Now when we passed a berg it was within a few yards. Faintly the bergs glimmered through the mist. Whether we hit one or not seemed a matter of fate. Yet always at the last moment the squinting watcher let out a yell "port" or "starboard," the helm was thrown over and we slipped by with a little to spare. These men ap-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

peared to possess some subtle instinct, some sixth sense that enabled them to see objects long before they were actually visible to the naked eye and this was just as well.

With intermittent patches of clear weather and fog we spent the day dodging icebergs. The coast of Labrador disappeared. It was not much of a loss. Then we entered a vast field of pack-ice that seemed to stretch indefinitely into the distance. As we poked our nose into a narrow open lead, the outlook was as gloomy as the portals of the underworld with the fires out. It was foggy, drizzly and cold.

The ship was woven like a shuttle through the threadlike openings. At the masthead a lookout selected the line of least resistance. His cry of "port," "starboard" or "hard over" was echoed by the helmsman and the wheel whirled accordingly. His voice was never silent. As a result our course became serpentine, inebriated, zigzag, devious and diabolical. No single minute passed without its being changed. The majestic bergs had left us as though contemptuous of the degenerate pack following at their heels.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

At times the helm did not respond quickly enough and then we would strike a pan with a thump that made the crockery rattle. It was hard to get used to these shocks, especially after dark. They gave one the feeling that the whole brumal contents of Davis Straits was about to burst through the schooner's planks.

From time to time small isthmuses of rotten ice blocked our progress. These were charged at full speed. The schooner would ride up on them until she was almost out of water before breaking through and proceeding on her way. This was interesting. Running into a blind pocket was also more or less of a sporting proposition, for as like as not the pans would close in behind us and seal us up in a nice little lagoon. Then the only thing left to do was "crash the gate," so to speak, and the schooner would shiver to her very keel from the impact.

The helmsman's job is not only laborious, but exacting. It is not a job for an amateur. On one famous Antarctic expedition a scientist was at the wheel while they were conning the vessel through the pack-ice. "Hard a port," the hoarse cry came

AN ARCTIC RODEO

down from the masthead. Nothing happened. The crash that followed almost took the masts out of her. "Why in Paradise didn't you hard a port?" yelled the lookout. "I couldn't," the scientist answered, "I was blowing my nose."

CHAPTER V

Don't travel until you've saved some money. Then if you want to keep it saved—don't travel.

POP PLIMPTON.

I

FOR twenty-four hours we wandered around in a labyrinth of ice like a cat chasing its own tail. The silence was heavy; the sea devoid of motion. Then towards evening the pangs, suffused with a soft rosy afterglow, began to heave gently, and a bird or two put in an appearance. The Skipper studied these omens like a witch doctor and apparently found them propitious, for he relieved himself of a prophecy: "We're nearing open water," he said, and, as a testimonial to the fact that his prophecies rarely miscarried, an hour later we were climbing the pyramidal seas of Davis Strait. For the next four days we continued to climb them and

AN ARCTIC RODEO

slip down their oily flanks with hypnotic regularity. "The dear knows where we are now," Billy the Cook remarked when he came up one day for a breath of air.

It was a life of strange contrasts; at times, peaceful, again full of acrobatic activity, but never dull. Twenty-five men crowded into a wooden hull not much bigger than a second-hand coffin constitute a positive guarantee against dullness. So does spontaneous combustion in a cargo of fireworks. The mess room housed thirteen of us; twelve in the double-decked bunks and one on a cot. Its dimensions were almost twenty by twenty-five feet and the mess table, which was screwed to the floor, occupied most of it. There was hardly room enough to flutter an eyelash.

The bunks were curtainless, so conscious or unconscious one's life story was a matter of public record. The most intimate personal details were subjected to the microscopic scrutiny of twelve pairs of curious eyes. Speaking roughly, everyone from Helen of Troy to Martha Washington has had a private life. They have demanded it as a natural right, yet nobody in that mess room had one worth

AN ARCTIC RODEO

writing about. Innocent little habits, considered part of one's charm at home, became there bizarre eccentricities. Attempting to play the part of the shrinking violet was useless. It was at once noticed and remarked on. If you didn't like the cut of a man's pajamas you told him so, and the accepted method of dealing with anything offensive was the biblical one of destroying it root and branch.

That was why the Chief Engineer threw the Radio Operator's oilskins overboard. The weather at this time did little else but vacillate between rain and fog, so oilskins became fashionable. They were of a sickly, yellow variety that made us look like a flock of "dirty canaries," but it wasn't until they were hung up in the warm mess room that their full flavor struck one. As they mellowed under the influence of the heat the air became rich with the fragrance of linseed oil and tar. The oilers of the Radio Operator were more ambitious, however, and threw off a distinct suggestion of gorgonzola as well.

"As far as that odor goes, I'm on a diet," the Chief remarked, and the next time he went on deck the oilers went overboard.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

In the after cabin there were only six of us, so the calm of our lives was almost monastic; yet there were small disharmonies. After washing, for instance, there was the problem of what to do with the water. The most orthodox method of disposal was merely leave it and deny all responsibility, though if it was snapped up the hatchway, followed by a prayer that it would miss the man at the wheel, the prayer was sometimes answered.

No! Life was never dull. If all else failed there was always the food to complain about. Billy the Cook made marvelous bread; his soups were a culinary caress and most of his other dishes never failed, but his boiled potatoes were lead—they would kill at twenty paces. His bacon was an oily horror, while his coffee was nothing short of hell-broth. The answer was simple. At four A.M. he arose, boiled his potatoes, fried his bacon and did an incantation over his coffee; then, pushing them back on the stove, let them stew in their own juice until seven-thirty. The results were no worse than might be expected. But the system could not be varied. It was a timeworn custom of the “Banks.”

Sometimes, but not often, a few of us were be-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

trayed into petty disloyalties towards other traditional sea dishes. If the following conversation be treason, let the salt beef make the most of it.

“The paint on this ship was donated by the Masury Paint Company, wasn’t it?”

“Sure.”

“And the wireless outfit was a gift of the National Carbon Company?”

“Sure.”

“Well, who contributed the salt beef?”

“Why, the U.S. Rubber Company.”

It was all very jejune.

Again, the unexpected was always happening. On the Fourth of July the Cowboy rose at four A.M. and emptied his six-shooter under the mess room table. As an act, it was both patriotic and surprising, but everybody slept right through it. For all the result it produced, it might just as well have been a bad joke as a good one.

Then the Professor with the bosky whiskers had a sixty-second birthday. We ate his health in wedges of cake produced by Billy. George gave him an apple. We gave him an orange. He gave us a short talk on “Glacial anti-cyclones,” proving

AN ARCTIC RODEO

that the atmospheric pressure over the North Pole is neither high nor low, but normal. He also explained about the "centrifugal snow broom which shapes the continental glacier of Greenland." It seemed an awful lot to get for an apple and an orange.

II

Scientific duties filled in the balance of our time. They were not arduous. In fact, they merely consisted in throwing hermetically sealed bottles overboard. It might be argued that anybody could do that, and so they could, but not with one hand holding on to the Arctic Circle. We were probably the most northerly bottle throwers of the season. Within them were slips of paper bearing our latitude and longitude, and a request in three languages that the chance finder mail them back to the Hydrographic Bureau, Washington, D.C., at his own expense. All this, of course, was for the purpose of ferreting out the paths of the ocean currents.

Our Expedition was bone dry, so the "empties" thus employed were ginger ale bottles. To be sure there was a considerable quantity of alcohol for the

AN ARCTIC RODEO

preservation of specimens, but the Government with great unction had rendered it unfit for human consumption, as though fearful that the absence of a "sniff and frisk" ordinance above the Arctic Circle might lead us into temptation. No rum rations were allowed for the crew, nor was there any medicinal alcohol even. A little later when we got shipwrecked we would have been glad of both. So we cast our ginger ale bottles into the sea with the hope that they would remain true to us even if they landed in Cuba.

Stowed away below were several sacks of corn and a bundle of small metal bands; our hope being that seductive persuasiveness of the corn would induce the ducks and geese of the Arctic regions to submit to having their legs banded. The moment they affect the slave bracelet is the moment their lives cease to be care-free. Should an Arctic duck with a banded leg unexpectedly appear at Palm Beach he at once falls under the suspicion of leading a double life—and that is the kind of thing that worries science. A barnagat goose wearing a leg band attached on the Labrador was recently found on the coast of Spain. It was described as being

AN ARCTIC RODEO

in an "exhausted condition," which sounds reasonable and clearly demonstrates what great travelers geese really are once they get started.

One evening as we were discussing this question of wanderlust in ducks and geese all hands were called to set the mainsail. There was a spanking breeze blowing from the south, and we tore through the water with everything drawing. Suddenly, far to the east, someone sighted the coast of Greenland. It was nothing but a faint nebulous streak lying at the edge of a heaving boisterous sea, yet it seemed drenched with romance and mystery as we stared at it. It was our land fall; the home of aborigines and prehistoric solitudes of ice and snow. Our imagination peopled it with trolls, gnomes and dwerghs, who guarded the secrets of its glaciers, while the kraken slunk about looking for odds and ends. It was a sight to stir one's blood.

But now the argument started, where were we? Of course, we knew it was Greenland, but just what part? There is 1650 miles of it. The Skipper thought we were off Godthaab. The Professor, on the other hand, considered that the general conformation indicated a propinquity to Sukkertop-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

pen. Personally, we couldn't see much choice; both places sounded like a gargle. The Skipper took a sounding. No bottom. "You see it can't be Sukkertoppen," he announced. Of course we saw. Nobody has ever found bottom off Sukkertoppen. "Well, anyway," he soothed us, "I know we're about sixty-five degrees North." We were just about to slip over the Arctic Circle.

In the morning we were in plain sight of the coast. Terrific mountain ranges of black basalt, covered with patches of white snow, lined the shore. It was a jagged, Alpine skyline, dour and hard looking, and entirely devoid of information as to our whereabouts. We seemed to be sailing along the edge of chaos.

Suddenly the attention of everyone is riveted on a vast wrinkled glacier front. It's smoke! How strange it looks! There on the beach, if one uses glasses, are tents surrounded by moving black dots vaguely resembling people. They wave a large white flag. We heave to. At last we will know where we are. The launch is lowered and bounds off towards land over high combing seas. Almost simultaneously four slender craft detach themselves

AN ARCTIC RODEO

from the shoreline and paddle towards us. As they appear on the summit of each wave they tremble for a moment in bold relief against the Arctic sky, then suddenly vanish into the next hollow as though plunging to the depths of eternity. Eskimos! Kayakers, in their skin canoes! How they manage to stay afloat in such a boisterous sea is a mystery. Even the launch is performing the most amazing gyrations. The first kayaker reaches it, is unceremoniously pulled aboard and with his kayak towing astern they return to the schooner.

Tense with excitement we line the deck. We are about to greet our first aborigine; to stand face to face with an untamed child of the north, skin garments and all! The launch bumps the vessel's side. A natty outing cap rises over the rail, then a countenance as round and beaming as a full moon. Follows a plump body garbed in a machine-knit sweater, a pair of cash-and-carry trousers and the kind of shoes guaranteed in the advertisements to regenerate the erring arch no matter how low it has fallen.

CHAPTER VI

He who marries my mother is my father.

ARAB PROVERB.

I

THE disconcerting thing about our first aborigine was the fact that he was so much better dressed than most of us. He was sartorially impeccable. As far as we knew none of us were that. It threw a slight tinge of embarrassment into the situation. We stood around him in a ring and stared. He stared back. We smiled. He smiled. We looked idiotic. So did he. Up to this point we stood all even.

Now someone started a new game. "What's your name?" they said.

The response was a series of seal barks and pelican cries that the sensitive ear found it very hard to bear. It was evident that as far as we were concerned he spoke a distinctly dead language.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

“He said his name is Oobearningitoot,” someone volunteered.

“No, it was Nachloongasoak,” the Zoologist corrected.

“Well, we won’t take any chances,” decided George. “From now on his name is Jake.”

Meanwhile the Skipper appeared to be rummaging about in his subconscious mind. “I’ve got some Eskimo stored away in my attic somewhere if I can only lay my hands on it,” seemed to express his purpose. Then suddenly a flow of eloquence fell from his lips that stamped him at once as one of the world’s great polyglots.

“Ninny Holstenborg?” he said.

The results were negative. “Holstenborg! Holstenborg! HOLSTENBORG!” he repeated on a rising scale culminating in a wild eerie yell.

The yell struck a responsive chord, for now in pantomime that could hardly be termed fluent, Jake indicated that Holstenborg lay just at the foot of the big promontory.

“Peeuk,” said the Skipper. “That means ‘good,’ ” he hastened to explained. “It’s lucky someone knew a bit of Eskimo.”

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Now Jake began stabbing the atmosphere with a stubby forefinger as though poking an invisible push button, following which he revolved an imaginary wheel with concrete violence.

“Maybe he wants to pilot us in,” suggested George. The Taxidermist disagreed. “He looks more like a contortionist warming up for his act.” However, the wheel was turned over to him, and radiating satisfaction from every pore he spun it until our prow pointed straight for the middle of a large mountain of solid rock.

At best, it would be difficult to find a place more sterile of welcome than the foreshore of Greenland. It is sinister, barren, forbidding, tortured; it looks like a steel engraving of a nightmare. But only when one finds himself on a wooden ship heading for the geographical center of a towering granite excrescence does he catch the full significance of this sterility.

“What we’re going to need is a couple of tons of blasting powder instead of a pilot,” murmured the Taxidermist. But after dodging innumerable, round protruding rocks, called “nunatuks” by Jake, we somehow missed the mountain and suddenly

AN ARCTIC RODEO

slipped into a narrow channel. A few more twists of the wheel and Holstenborg slowly emerged from behind its geological barbicans. Our anchor chain rattled out. We were above the Arctic Circle, face to face with our destination. Over twenty-three hundred miles to the south lay New York. Nobody cared.

The comedy was over. Before us lay Greenland, theme of legend, song and story; yet so little known. Land of mystery and paradox. The spirit of adventure hovered over us; our thoughts wandered in vast virgin solitudes.

For a moment the temptation to pose as the terrestrial representatives of Americus Vespuclius, Pizzaro, Drake, Hawkins and the rest of the world's Great Rovers was almost irresistible. But only for a moment. A young man came off in a rowboat and requested George, in English that was impossible to misconstrue, not to land until the "Manager had examined our papers."

That was the end of Americus Vespuclius.

Greenland it seems, among other things, is a Danish Crown Colony operated as a monopoly and nobody without half a barrel of permits and a zip-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

per-bag full of credentials is allowed across its three mile limit. Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven is also known to be exceedingly difficult, but there the resemblance between the two places begins and ends.

The plangent treble of children's voices drifted over the water. The bright hues of the women's costumes stood out brilliantly in the sunshine. The Manager pored over George's credentials. Viewed from this angle the scene was almost bucolic.

The town consisted of several frame houses entirely surrounded by sod huts. There was a lavish supply of background in the form of beetling cliffs and soaring peaks, but minor details like trees and grass seemed to have been completely ignored. A brand-new church looked almost self-conscious compared with the atmosphere of weather-beaten wisdom thrown off by the residences of such functionaries as the Manager, Minister and School Teacher. The buildings painted in vivid reds, blues, greens served as a feeble antidote to the swart background. There was also some poetry in the fact that a huge whale's jawbone served as a gateway to the Manager's dwelling. Yet in spite of all this

AN ARCTIC RODEO

promise, the fish houses lining the water's edge culminated in nothing more glamorous than a halibut cannery.

George's credentials proved flawless. We were officially admitted to Greenland. According to tradition we were now in a position to relax. The struggle was over. Henceforth our lives should be orderly and temperate. That was what one had a right to expect. As a matter of fact, the moment was productive of a diabolical restlessness; of action which came with explosive suddenness and continued for weeks with hurricane violence. From this point forward, we traveled like a troupe of gypsies collectively afflicted with the seven years' itch.

II

Our new mode of life was ushered in by a banquet on the schooner followed by an informal dance. The order could have been reversed without deranging things very much. There was canned soup, canned salmon, canned sweet potatoes; then everything that wasn't screwed down to the mess room floor was pushed back and we had a round of canned

AN ARCTIC RODEO

music. A dance consisted of six steps one way, a crash against a bulkhead, six steps back and a violent collision with the tool chest. Yet it was all very enjoyable and no one was knocked unconscious.

The guests of honor were Manager Bistrup and his wife Inge, Helge Bangstead, Arctic Explorer, Miss Binch his fiancée, Pippe Jesson, companion to Mrs. Bistrup, and the Assistant Manager who responded to a name as unpronounceable as a Welsh holiday. These names sound Danish and so they are. Yet Manager Bistrup was born in Greenland, his father before him being a Government official. The profession seemed to be a fever in the blood. Strangely enough, the Cowboy from Sweet-grass, Montana, was the only one able to carry on a conversation with our guest. He sprang from Norwegian stock and still spoke the language of Eric the Red, in spite of the fact that he had never before seen salt water. The racial currents take strange twists at times.

Ever since our arrival a ring of curious faces had been glued to the mess room skylight. Evidently we offered a form of entertainment very

AN ARCTIC RODEO

highly thought of in these regions, for the more indulgent Greenlanders seemed to have brought their whole families and all the necessaries for an indefinite stay. The dinner party held them spell-bound, but the dance they regarded with a delight nothing short of delirious. It was flattering in a way. Some of them, as though prepared for tourist traffic, were well stocked with merchandise; seal skin slippers, dog skin moccasins, hats of eider duck skin, blankets of bird skins; all of it ideal moth fodder. Yet in the heat of the moment few of us thought of that.

But now, right in the middle of the festivities, so to speak, the order to heave anchor was given. "We're going forty miles inland up Ikertok Fiord and drop the Professors," George explained. "Got to get a move on. We've a thousand miles to go yet."

It hardly seemed as though there was that much latitude left. However, the party was over. Our guests departed. Fifteen fathoms of anchor chain were laboriously retrieved. Once more we were under way. It was half past ten and a beautiful sunny night.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Slowly, but surely, ever since the Straits of Belle Isle, the sun had been "stealing a few hours from the night," until suddenly with something almost amounting to surprise we realized that it had taken things into its own hands and given up setting entirely. We had reached the land where "day slept with its eyes open." Moon and stars had beaten a cowardly retreat and gone into permanent hiding. There were no more sunrises to strain the emotions or polychromatic sunsets to lilt over, and as a result life was stripped of much that was lyrical. A whole series of familiar sensations became atrophied from disuse.

Our existence became unnatural; permanently flooded with light. It hammered incessantly against one's eyes. There was no escaping it. One slept fitfully, regardless of time, whenever he became exhausted, to dream of the soothing narcotic effect of black velvet darkness.

III

Hour after hour we glided over the deep silent waters of Ikertok Fiord, toward the icy interior of Greenland. Bistrup and Bangstead accompanied

AN ARCTIC RODEO

us and removed all vagueness from the journey by supplying a pilot no less of a Beau Brummel than Jake. They were also lavish with information. It took us a long time to recover from the facts and figures absorbed that night.

There is not much stingo in the assertion that Greenland is the second largest island on the globe. The fact that it stretches from Cape Farewell, latitude 59° North, into the Polar Sea to about 83° North, is also practically barren of emotional appeal. If its length overall is around sixteen hundred miles and its maximum width is six hundred or thereabouts little can be done to alter it at this late date. If it is shaped like the cross-section of a piece of liver nobody's to blame; and there's no use suggesting that if France was blown up to four times its present size it would just equal Greenland's area, for that is hardly likely to ever happen.

All this was merely in the nature of a preliminary canter. Its actual area is 825,000 square miles, but 710,000 square miles of it lies buried under a vast sheet of paleocrystic ice, rising at its highest point to nearly 10,000 feet. This is referred to as the

AN ARCTIC RODEO

“Ice Cap” and is the largest body of ice of its kind known to exist. It covers the interior in a gently undulating sheet, rounding off as it reaches the shoreline in a sharp drop. What the contour of the land beneath it resembles, remains, and is likely to remain, a deep mystery. This is disappointing to all contour-lovers.

If the area of the Ice Cap is deducted from its total area we find that all Greenland really consists of is 115,000 square miles of coastal fringe. The place is in the middle of a glacial period, with very little indication of a thaw setting in.

Bangstead had frequently traveled into the interior. It's a dead, storm-lashed desert of ice almost defying exploration. Kryokonite, or cosmic dust, lies scattered over its surface and when the summer sun beats down innumerable potholes form, ranging in diameter from a few inches to three or four feet. Lakes fill the depressions, while miniature rivers rush down to the sea carving deep canyons in the ice. Traveling is an aquatic adventure. No living thing is seen. The coastal fringe ranges in width from a few hundred yards to a hundred

AN ARCTIC RODEO

miles. From all accounts it seemed more like a frazzle than a fringe.

That about covered the physical characteristics. However, the facts continued to come fast and furious. The place was discovered by a Norseman named Gunbjorn, but he let the matter drop. It was not until that enthusiastic realtor, Eric the Red, ran across it in 983 A.D. that Greenland really came into its own. His vivid imagination supplied it with a name. His seductive persuasiveness populated it with followers from Iceland. After a taste of Iceland there was a certain appeal to the suggestion that they could be no worse off in Greenland. Loading families, worldly goods and cattle into their viking ships they sailed around to the west coast. The sight that met their eyes is described by a modern enthusiast as follows: "The costal fringe of Greenland is one of the most sublime and magnificent cycloramas of nature; its superb mountains, terraced cliffs, chaotic abysses, sheets of spotless snow, endless stretches of glacial ice, numberless silver threads of winding waters have no equal." It sounds just the kind of place one would select for the old homestead. A "ter-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

"raced cliff" in your back yard, with the front porch terminating in a "chaotic abyss" certainly adds a mellow touch of hominess. They unloaded their viking ships and settled down. A man's real estate holdings were vertical instead of horizontal. All one had to do to see what was going on in the cow pasture was lie down on his back and look up.¹ Each family had its private fiord. Some of the more patrician had even three or four. If a farmer was unable to use all his fiords he could always trade one in for a "chaotic abyss." It was dandy.

There was no lumber in Greenland, yet ships were a necessity to the settlers, so as long as supplies came from Europe all went well. But for some strange reason about the year 1500 the Old World suddenly became so interested in its own affairs it suffered a complete lapse of memory with respect to the colonists. They were entirely forgotten. For the next hundred years they remained forgotten. Then around 1580 Frobisher and Davis had occasion to look the place over and were mildly

¹ The grass grew straight out sideways like a cat's whiskers and everyone carried a parachute instead of an umbrella.—RING LARDNER.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

surprised at finding no Norsemen. It didn't ruin their trip or change their plans in any way, but they wrote home about it.

In 1721 an idealistic missionary named Hans Egede visited Greenland "to preach the gospel to the descendants of the original settlers." It was a splendid idea defeated only by the fact that he was several centuries too late. The Norsemen had suffered a complete and irrevocable annihilation. They had evaporated into thin air. The sea gulls alone remained to listen to his preaching. The fiords were empty, so were the abysses. There are few more dramatic eclipses recorded in history.

It seems as though that ought to end the matter but someone invariably asks:

"What happened to them?"

Several things, none of them pleasant.

First of all, when contact with Europe ceased, supplies were un procurable. After everything resembling food was eaten, the settlers were obliged to fall back on a diet of moss. The results were inevitable. "Exhumed skeletons reveal the later generations of Norsemen as very short in stature." A moss diet is bound to stunt the growth. "The

AN ARCTIC RODEO

death rate, especially among the children, was obviously high. This, and the worn down condition of the teeth in the skulls, evidences the fact that only the toughest varieties of vegetable foods such as lichens, leaves, roots and bark were available. A chronic state of undernourishment prevailed, ultimately ending in racial death." Could anything be gloomier! It is not pleasant even to imagine sitting down to a meal of bark and having someone ask you to "please pass the lichens" or "try another helping of leaves."

As though this was not enough the climate selected this very unpropitious moment to demonstrate that it was subject to change without notice. On their first arrival the Norsemen had kept cattle and raised grain. Though not lush, life was reasonably flatulent. Then a glacial period suddenly set in. This is proved by the fact "that coffins have been found entwined in long plant roots in soil that is now perpetually frozen." The history of Greenland seems to blossom on a pile of coffins.

Any reasonable person would admit that this was enough. But now "the southward advance of the aboriginal Eskimo took place. It was coeval with

AN ARCTIC RODEO

the increase of drift ice along the coast. But unlike the Eskimo the Norsemen were unfitted for hunting seal and walrus on the ice." There seemed to be a clear inference that when the Eskimos weren't hunting walrus they were hunting Norsemen. There was no closed season on either and they appear to have found the one just as sporting as the other, for "many nordic skulls have been found transfixated by Eskimo arrowheads."

The final blow was struck when the brighter aborigines, in an attempt to preserve the Norsemen as permanent trophies, took to marrying them.

So they were starved, murdered and married, any one of which conditions is extremely debilitating. Occurring simultaneously they are usually fatal. The original settlers became a pleasant memory.

So today the result of this mingling insists on being referred to as a Greenlander. With a good deal of reason he is proud of his synthetic ancestry. To his ears the use of the term Eskimo is as degrading as though one had branded him a barbarian, savage or aborigine. So frequently the blue eyes, red hair and fair complexions of the Greenlander sing a song of Scandinavia, while skin clothing, aromatic

AN ARCTIC RODEO

igloos and characteristic food just as surely proclaim the Eskimo. Yet they do not worry about split personalities. Each half leads an existence of automatic felicity. When the Norsemen gets hungry the Eskimo goes out and harpoons a seal. When the Eskimo returns from the hunt and craves entertainment, the Norseman unlimbers the old accordion and fills the night with music. The Eskimo has even been known to go out and get a drink for the Norseman and to fall asleep when his other half got drowsy. There is only one thing the Eskimo refuses to do for the Norseman, no matter how great the provocation, and that is take a bath.

At the moment the Danish government has about 14,000 wards. During the last hundred years the population has doubled, which indicates rather a lackadaisical attitude toward the birth rate. The death rate is normal, being one apiece all around. There is a written and spoken language—a newspaper—local currency—in fact there is much that we have invented to make life complicated.

At this point we began to feel as though we had swallowed an encyclopædia. The cerebral strain was beginning to tell. Fully dressed, George

AN ARCTIC RODEO

sprawled on his bunk asleep. Bistrup, dead to the world, stretched on a locker and indulged in the kind of breathing known as stertorous. The Skipper in a full set of oilskins sat on the edge of a box sunk in a deep, but formal, unconsciousness. Bangstead lit one cigarette from another.

Suddenly the pilot stuck his head down the hatchway. "*Ikerasassuk*," he yelled. We shook ourselves. Far away in the distance a dog uttered a long wolfish howl. He couldn't help it.

CHAPTER VII

"This Evolution is a lot of much ado about nothing. You don't suppose it worries me if my prehistoric Grandfather was a baboon?"

"No! But it probably worried your prehistoric Grandmother."

M. PERLMAN.

I

AT four A.M. we anchored off a small fishing village responding to the musical name of Sarfanguak. Some of us went ashore to try to take our minds off the fact that breakfast still lay buried three hours distant in the future.

We found a village of sod huts surrounding a small beach, at the moment entirely occupied by the carcasses of seven stranded sharks. They were very tired carcasses screaming for interment. But that was none of our business. As we stepped from our dory, a number of distinctly seedy looking dogs staggered away from a light repast of shark cut-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

lets. Their method of locomotion was a strange combination of roll and swagger. They looked as though they were slightly advanced in liquor. One looked twice. It was hard to believe! They were tipsy! Utterly and hilariously soaked! It was the first case of canine inebriation that had ever come to our notice.

“That’s nothing,” Bangstead replied to our looks of interrogation. “They often get that way. It’s from eating decomposed shark meat. When it reaches a certain stage chemical reactions take place and it acts on them like an intoxicant. They have to sleep it off.”

“Something ought to be done to curb their animal instincts,” said George. “Evil appetites like that ought to be amended.” But we let the matter drop.

We entered the brightly painted frame dwelling of the local Manager. There was a neat kitchen. There was a bedroom containing a Gargantuan bed —the type of bed in which one could easily become bewildered and remain lost for days. There was a mid-Victorian parlor full of knick-knacks. All was meticulously clean.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Three Greenlanders of the gentle sex brewed coffee. Their clothing was durable, but artistic. From a skin collar a network of beads hung down over their shoulders—nicely colored beads arranged in geometrical patterns. Their blouses were of bright gingham. Short trunks of sealskin, with vari-colored panels running down the side met high skin moccasins at the knee, also much bepanelled and inlaid with bits of highly colored skin and, it apparently being something of an occasion, their tops were edged with a rigging of lace.

Two of these lassies were young and surprisingly easy to look at, full of sparkle and vivaciousness. The third was beginning to weazen slightly. In fact she showed distinct traces of weathering.

The coffee was virile. It was so strong you could hardly stir it with a spoon. It had already become apparent that much of our social life in the Arctic was to revolve around nerve-jangling coffee and mordant cigarettes. They kept one awake at any rate.

The cheery homestead of the Manager was a pleasant picture. But there was a reverse to it. A glance into a native's sod hut revealed conditions

AN ARCTIC RODEO

that were much less rosy. An earthen tunnel about four feet high and ten or twelve long led one into the dwelling. It was a very unpleasant passageway, paved with good intentions, mud and fish bones. Half way in, while we were plunged in stygian darkness, eight Eskimo dogs disputed our right to enter. Inasmuch as any slight differences there may be between an Eskimo dog and a wolf are all in favor of the wolf we naturally decided to drop in some other time when we were passing. But Bistrup with a few vicious clouts drove them on into the house. We followed. We had to, the rest of the party was crowding us from behind. Near the main entrance, in an offset, was a small cooking compartment, to make use of which one must have had to dislocate every bone in his body. We pushed on through a round hole and entered the dwelling. It consisted of a single room about ten feet square and five feet in height. A dim funereal beam of light filtered through a small pane of glass set high up in the wall. A hole in the roof served as an outlet for smoke. Against one wall was a raised platform of planks covered with some well-worn skins and a few loose feathers. This was the bed. The

AN ARCTIC RODEO

floor was mud; the roof was mud; the walls were mud. If you touched the ceiling mud ran down the back of your neck. The name of the man that lived there was probably "Mud."

As we entered, three children dressed in torn and greasy skins were asleep on the bed-platform. Fish heads, bones and scraps of long forgotten meals lay everywhere. The air might have been termed "heavy," all the oxygen having been extracted from it some days previously. Sinking to our hands and knees we made a break for the sunshine.

We returned to the septic beach surrounded by all the women and children in the settlement. To them we were objects of great curiosity. In many cases their hair was gathered into a knot on top of the head and decorated with ribbons of various colors. A great deal more than decoration was involved in this simple custom. As it was explained to us, the unmarried women affected red ribbons; married women, blue; widows, black, and those that fell into none of these categories, green.

"The 'wearing of the green' takes on a new significance," said George. "What are those that wear red and black mixed?"

AN ARCTIC RODEO

"A widow who's willing to take another chance," suggested the Cowboy.

The Taxidermist was pensive. "Well," he remarked at length, "there's no excuse for a fellow committing a social error up here unless he's color blind."

II

At noon we reached the head of the fiord and disembarked the Professors. The outstanding facts of the next few hours were heat and mosquitoes. There was no question about the heat, it was incandescent, that was all there was to it, but the mosquitoes gave rise to considerable difference of opinion. For instance, several contended they were as large as quail, which was obviously absurd, they were not any larger than humming birds though much more ferocious. It was a great deal too hot for a place with the reputation of the Arctic. According to tradition we should have been nursing chilblains at the moment, yet all we were in danger of was sunstroke. It destroyed one's confidence in the climate.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

The intense, brilliant light caused our mountainous surroundings to stand out with stereoptic distinctness. The scene lacked academic interest. It possessed no lyrical appeal. It was merely a monotonous repetition of desolation, and the last place in the world one would have selected in which to spend a summer vacation. Yet this was the spot the Professors picked out, and off they got. The Ice Cap that was to be the chief object of their researches lay about seventy-five miles inland. Their plan was to form a base camp here and gradually work in to the ice.

A raft was constructed by the simple expedient of laying planks across three dories. It was a strange looking contrivance, yet floated about a ton of cargo. This method of rafting cargo ashore was used several times that summer with fair success, though the dories were apt to separate with fickle suddenness and let everything into the water.

Saying good-bye to the pedagogues was rather depressing. We'd been shipmates for some time now and after a look at the scenery the suspicion grew strong in us that we'd never see them again. One of them, a Geologist by trade, gazed at the wall

AN ARCTIC RODEO

of rock that towered above us and remarked sadly: "That's nice."

"If you can see anything nice about that you've got a good ear for music," we replied.

"I said it was nice and it is nice," he answered irritably, "g-n-e-i-s-s," spelling the word with painful accuracy. "The G is silent as in gnu, gnaw and gnome." And putting on a beekeeper's veil and a pair of gloves he set to work fighting mosquitoes and trying to find his bedroll.

That was the last we saw of them, but as we rowed back to the schooner the phrase kept echoing through our heads like a haunting melody: "the G is silent as in gnu, gnaw, gnome—the G is silent—gnu, gnaw, gnome—"

Just as we arrived a native in a kayak paddled up to the schooner with an accordion strapped to his back. The "push and pull" is the national instrument of Greenland and as our friend was familiar with the fragments of three distinct melodies, he spent the evening in carefully piecing them together and then tearing them all apart again. This made for wistful music. There was something infantile and pathetic about it as it stole over the still

AN ARCTIC RODEO

waters of the fiord to finally lose itself in the vague distances of the Arctic solitudes. In fact, just about this time everything seemed tinged with pathos. The thought of Eric the Red and the original settlers filled us with melancholy. The hard life of their present descendants, the general aspect of the country, the Professors, Billy the Cook, George, the mosquitoes, the schooner—all saddened us.

We hadn't had any sleep for over thirty-six hours.

III

The next thing we were conscious of was a violent pounding on the cabin skylight; a polite nautical suggestion that all hands gather on deck and heave anchor. It was five-thirty A.M. We always seemed to be heaving anchor. With respect to the *Effie M. Morrissey* this was a manly sport at best, but when one was half asleep it trenched on the perilous. The mechanical operation of the schooner from bilge pump to windlass was entirely a matter of muscular exertion. Nothing as effeminate as a

AN ARCTIC RODEO

donkey engine was permitted to enter our lives. Before we got through the summer we had done so much hand work, thinking with us was merely a wrist motion.

We hove anchor by the simple method of pumping an iron lever up and down. This was nothing but a healthy exercise if the lever didn't come loose when you were pushing down. In that case it was surprising how suddenly the deck rose to meet you. The ordinary laws of gravity seemed to be momentarily suspended. After a thorough search one generally found his feet where his head ought to be and looked at life from a new viewpoint. It was osteopathic.

A deep reciprocal suspicion existed between the port and starboard contingent of lever pushers. Neither was ever entirely satisfied that they weren't the only ones who were doing any work. They frequently mentioned it to each other.

We fought for that anchor inch by inch. At intervals, as it wound around the drum, the chain lapped over on itself. Then it was hammered loose with a small sledge and the anchor took up the slack with a terrific jerk that was hard on one's

AN ARCTIC RODEO

teeth. There were no sea chanties. We had other things to do with our breath.

Hilaire Belloc says: "The best noise in all the world is the rattle of the anchor chain when one comes into harbor at last"; and Lawrence Irving adds: "As a sensation it is only equalled by the first sight of a dripping shank of an anchor fished up by hand." They are both right.

On this particular morning thirty-five fathoms of chain were hanging out of the schooner. Winding it in took a matter of forty-five minutes. Henceforth, when nosing into an anchorage, the depth of water in which the Skipper finally let go was a matter of great interest to us. For we knew that what goes down must come up.

IV

On our way out of the fiord we paused for a short time at Sarfanguak, the village of roistering dogs, so the Doctor could "blood group" the natives. It was quite an interesting game—to watch. He first took four small pieces of clean glass and to each applied a drop of serum. There were four distinct serums brought hermetically sealed all the way

AN ARCTIC RODEO

from New York. Each in some mysterious way was representative of the four great racial groups: Mongolian, Caucasian, Indian and Negroid. Now men, women and children were lined up. As they passed before him he tagged them on the end of the finger with a long sharp needle, relieved them of four drops of blood one of which was applied to each of the serums; that serum producing a coagulation revealed the racial identity of the victim.

There was no way of concealing your ancestry from that fellow—as long as your blood held out. Of course, the great questions he was trying to solve were: What are the Greenlanders? And are the Eskimos Mongolians from Siberia or Indians from Hudson Bay?

“That’s probably been worrying these folks for years,” whispered the Cowboy as the Doc speared one after another, “but personally I’m not so much worried about where I came from, it’s where I’m going from here that interests me.”

After receiving a jab in the digit the Doctor handed the subject a pleasant smile and a cigarette, after which they were supposed to disband. This

AN ARCTIC RODEO

particular “grouping” was swinging along at a great rate. We were rapidly getting the low-down on the whole village, when the Doc suddenly enquired: “How many people live here anyway?”

“Thirty-eight at the moment,” he was informed.

“That’s interesting,” he replied, “I’ve already grouped fifty-five.”

“Sure,” the Cowboy explained, “they’re coming around twice for another smoke. Their blood is so mixed anyway I didn’t think it mattered.”

So now, as far as the citizens of Sarfanguak are concerned at any rate, their racial secret will continue to lie deeply buried under its weight of centuries.

v

An hour later we were drifting silently toward the foot of a huge cliff. The shrill cries of countless birds filled the air. A mile away their uproar had been perfectly audible, but softened by distance until it resembled the murmur of falling water. Now it was rasping and raucous. Row upon row they stood on the rocky ledges with the mathematical precision of a military formation, until it was

AN ARCTIC RODEO

transformed into a vast mosaic of black and white. With an air of grave importance they sat gazing fixedly into space apparently seeing everything, comprehending nothing; they were motionless, beady-eyed, pompous.

It was our first experience with an Arctic bird rookery.

This particular rookery was known as "Tatarak-suit" or "place of many kittiwakes," and in spite of the fact that it counted numerous razor-billed auks among its regular patrons it was well named. In this single colony there was supposed to be upwards of a hundred and fifty thousand of them.

As we neared the foot of the cliff someone with an experimental turn of mind suggested that it would be nice to see what would happen if a gun was fired. The response to its echoes was instantaneous. The air pulsated with the wild beating of myriads of wings. Hysterical feathered bodies obscured the sun, and the things those birds called us in very vulgar nasal tones of voice were enough to shock the most hardened. For a while they were very abusive; then they appeared to grow vague as to just what it was that had so excited them, and

AN ARCTIC RODEO

soon in squads, platoons and companies they retired once more to their ledges muttering to themselves. In no time they had settled down to their regular occupation of staring into space with unseeing glassy eyes.

The fact that after such a riot they are able to pick out the right nest from a hundred thousand exact duplicates is a high tribute to that mysterious quality called instinct. It would also be interesting to know just how they manage to find their favorite rookery in the spring after wintering in the South, and why kittiwakes invariably go to one particular place, guillemots and murres to another, eider ducks to still another, never mingling and each respecting religiously the proprietary rights of the others.

The cliffside surrounding our particular colony was emerald green. Its outskirts were honey-combed with fox burrows. The pungent aroma of the gulls mingled strangely with the musty smell of their traditional enemy. The birds lived on fish; the foxes lived on the birds. It was a sanguinary circle. No matter how inaccessible the nests were placed on the face of the cliff, eggs and fledglings

AN ARCTIC RODEO

were continually being seized with vertigo and falling to the rocks below. All a fox had to do was lie down and wait long enough and he got hit on the head with an omelette.

At periodic intervals another predatory animal put in an appearance, with whom even the foxes were unable to contend—man. He climbed the cliffs from below; he hung down over them from above; he stopped at nothing in his feverish search for eggs, eggs and more eggs. Frequently he ended up a crumpled heap of broken bones, and egg collecting ceased to interest him.

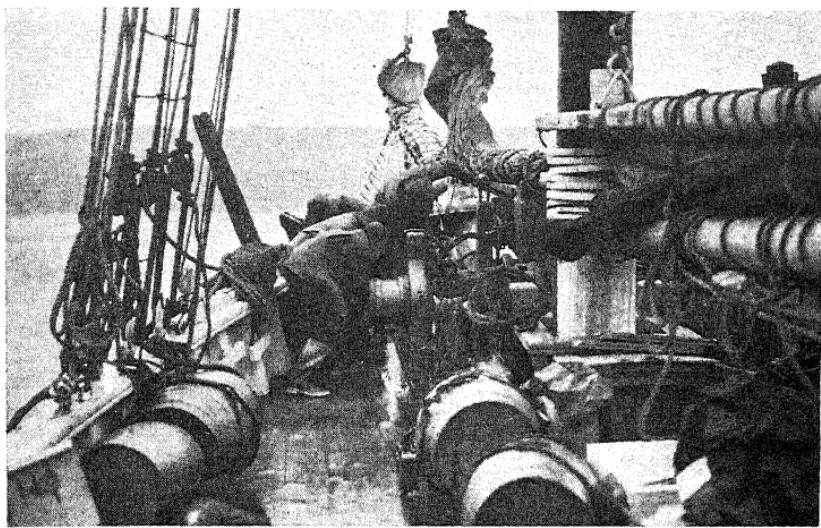
But our particular rookery was something more than a mere depositary for unwelcome eggs. It was the center of a perfect, miniature Arctic flower garden. Surrounding it were a few yards of lush green grasses sprinkled with a bewildering variety of flowers, lilliputian yet perfect. Trees were scattered here and there. They were not as umbrageous as they sound, however. In fact, it was only when one tripped over them he was conscious of their existence. They were about three feet long and ran horizontally along the ground, yet they were the full-grown, perfectly developed Arctic specimens.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

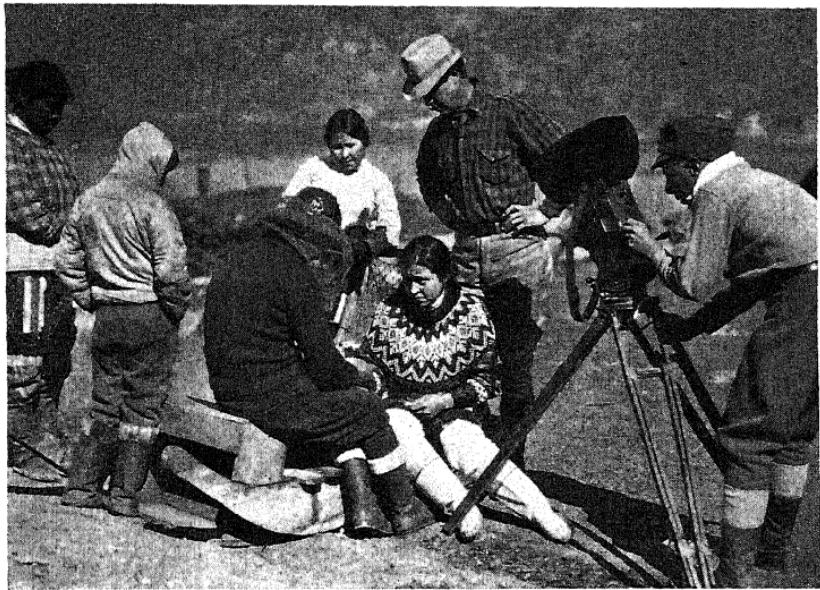
A few yards away rocky sterility stretched as far as the eye could reach, relieved here and there by patches of snow and fields of glacial ice.

We drifted toward the mouth of the fiord, a flotilla of native boats after us, vendors of codfish and curiosities. One had a strange monster of the deep called a "wolf fish." He was anxious to move it. He even made a very favorable discount for cash. He had kept it a little too long. It was purchased for the Zoologist.

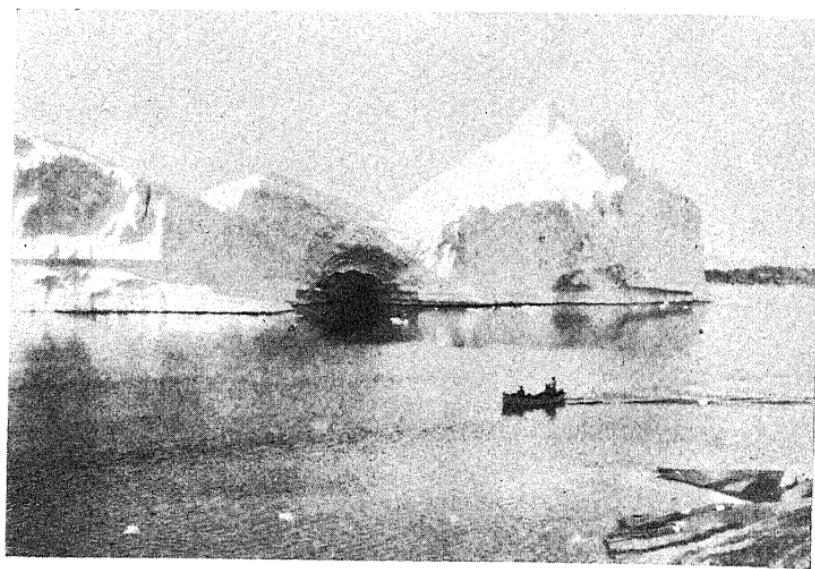
Bistrup and Bangstead left us. We headed out to sea.



WE CHANTED UP THE ANCHOR BY THE HEALTHY METHOD OF PUMPING
AN IRON LEVER UP AND DOWN.



THE DOC BLOOD-GROUPED THE NATIVES BY TAGGING THEM ON THE END
OF THE FINGER WITH A LONG SHARP NEEDLE.



THE CHIEF INDUSTRY OF GREENLAND IS THE MANUFACTURING AND
EXPORTING OF ICEBERGS.



THE COWBOY TRIED THE ESKIMO TRICK OF TURNING COMPLETELY OVER
UNDER WATER IN A KAYAK. HE WAS JUST 50% SUCCESSFUL.

CHAPTER VIII

*Fool me once, shame on you;
Fool me twice, shame on me.*

OLD SPANISH SAYING.

I

ALL went well the following day until we ran into a bank of rolling oily clouds and the breeze freshened to half a gale. At times we barely held our own against it. Then we began to move backwards faster than we did forwards. With a limited supply of fuel oil and no chance of replenishing it, this was a waste of time, so the Skipper dodged behind an island called Arfit and anchored in water as smooth as a mill pond. Personally, we will always remember Arfit, for that night we had our first parboiled kittiwakes for supper. They were so tough you couldn't even cut the gravy with a knife. Since then our idea of the ultimate degree of toughness the English

AN ARCTIC RODEO

language is capable of expressing is contained in the phrase: "As tough as the breast of a parboiled kittiwake."

For twenty-four hours we waited for the storm to abate, wiling away the time by poking around the rocky bays and inlets of the neighborhood. The rays of the sun filtered through angry clouds. The scenery was savage. Near the ruins of an ancient sod hut some weatherbeaten walrus skulls roused our flagging interest. It was well we found them. We had almost given up hope of ever engaging in battle with anything more dangerous than a razor-billed auk. At once everyone began targeting his rifle. The primitive urge to destroy took possession of us. We champed at the bit so to speak and longed for red-blood action. It came. George was always dependable in this respect.

"I think I'll organize a small shore party," he announced. "This is a grand opportunity for a little collecting."

"What will we collect?" someone asked.

"Collect?" he repeated vaguely. "Oh—anything that's loose."

So with the Cabin Boy, Cowboy and George we

AN ARCTIC RODEO

found ourself wandering over a barren rocky countryside looking for something "loose." The loosest objects revealed in the course of an arduous search were a couple of sparrow-like snow buntings that flitted ahead of us obviously engaged in a little collecting on their own account.

"How about a snow bunting group for the Museum?" we suggested in a moment of discouragement.

"All right," George agreed. "Bring them in."

We went after them. We stalked them, flanked them, enfiladed them and surrounded them, but did not bring them in. They were impervious to gun fire. Then the Cowboy sprayed them with shot. They continued collecting. It didn't even take their minds off their work. The Cabin Boy, with all the enthusiasm of youth, hurled a few rounds of death at them. George now made a stalk that would have caused an uproar at the field trials of any kennel club. He made use of protective coloration. In turn he looked like a rock, a piece of moss, a puddle of water. He came to a point, body rigid, nose to the ground. He could see the whites of their eyes now. Six times he blasted them point blank. It

AN ARCTIC RODEO

looked like a massacre, but as far as the snow buntings were concerned the results were negative. Momentarily he was dazed, then grabbing the gun by the barrel he whirled round and round like a hammer-thrower and flung it far into the middle of a small swamp.

We have never seen a gun thrown further. It was amazing. We all became so interested in how far the gun went we forgot all about the snow buntings. They went their way. We went after the gun. Everybody was satisfied.

We didn't return empty-handed, however. Our chase after the snow buntings led us past a group of sod huts. They had been lived in recently and yielded some stone fish hooks, stone blubber lamps, bits of fur of the Arctic hare and spindles for spinning the fur into yarn. There were also several window-panes. These were fitted into the roof of the igloo just over the entrance, and consisted of the lining of a seal's stomach. Nicely stretched and dried seal vellum makes a very decent window-pane. It may get a little baggy in a rain storm and is opaque enough to insure complete privacy, but a sort of intestinal osmosis permits an Arctic twi-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

light to filter through, which is grateful to the eye.

At another spot we found some natives hopping stones. This appears to be one of the popular Arctic sports. A series of thirty or forty flat stones are laid out about a yard apart, after the manner of stepping stones. The game is to hop from one to another without missing a step. It's a glorified kind of hop-scotch. All kinds of variations are possible, of course, but at best it would be hard for a young man to go wrong from the effects of such a game.

II

The storm finally ceased and we headed north once more. Towards evening we seemed to be the only moving object in a vast world of shadows. The coast of Greenland was a faint streak of indigo to the east; to the west storm clouds lowered. It was so gloomy in fact that as an antidote a special rehearsal of the ship's orchestra was called. We were right in the middle of a very bright bit of arpeggio work when someone stuck his head down the skylight and yelled: "All hands on deck to receive visitors." It sounded impossible, but then one could

AN ARCTIC RODEO

never be sure. So the first violin gave the signal—
“Every man for himself.”

When we reached the deck there sure enough was an Eskimo floating on an oily sea in a completely equipped kayak. Two harpoons with their throwing stick were strapped to its forward deck, a lance hung from its port side, a rifle in its seal-skin scabbard was ready for instant use. Behind him were a sealskin float and coil of rawhide rope. His head was wrapped in a piece of white cotton cloth to create the illusion as he crept up on his quarry that he was nothing but a small cake of ice. Several ducks were secured to the forward deck.

It was a fragile craft about eighteen feet long and eighteen inches wide consisting of a framework of small bits of wood lashed together and covered with tightly stretched sealskin. Even when at rest it refused to remain upright unless the paddle was used as a stabilizer. To enter one of those aquatic atrocities one was obliged to squeeze himself into a circular cockpit several sizes too small for his body and sit on the floor in a puddle of water with his legs shoved straight before him. If it went upside down the occupant went with it—and stayed with

AN ARCTIC RODEO

it. Nothing would dislodge him. To make this a certainty he wore a waterproof shirt made of our old friend the seal intestine. This terminated in a hood fitted tightly around the face by the old-fashioned method of the puckering string; the wrists were bound tightly, while his shirt tail was buttoned securely to the periphery of the cockpit. He was permanently built into that kayak like a chrysalis into its cocoon. There was some reason in this however. The occupant was able to turn upside down and paddle himself up again without getting his feet wet. He could do even better than that. He could tip over on one side and come up on the other. In fact, he could do everything a halibut could do and a lot of things no well brought up fish would dream of doing.

Yet if anything punctured the tightly stretched skin covering there was no such thing as pulling up by the roadside and vulcanizing a patch on, he just had to sit still and sink. If a heavy storm arose when he was miles off shore, he fought it out until he was either engulfed or the weather moderated. It is a lonely life and one to be avoided by a poor sailor.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Our particular visitor, however, did not appear to be cast down in the slightest. His face was wreathed in a jovial and contented smile. He was master of his fate. He gave us a long dissertation in the vernacular. It sounded as though he was eating alphabet soup. We gave him a tin can full of biscuits and parted with mutual good will. He became a lonely speck on the water, then disappeared in the gloom.

Soon a vast flotilla of icebergs from Disco Bay began to float past us and proceed majestically on their way to the North Atlantic. The lighting became weird. To the south, a dense bank of fog obscured the horizon; to the east the plutonic shoreline was bathed in a dark purple haze; while to the north, from beneath low-lying clouds, sunlight streamed. The water was black as ink. In it the great bergs floated like specters wrapped in shrouds of white samite.

We had plum duff for supper.

III

Godhavn, located on Disco Island and known as Lievely to the old whalers, is probably the most im-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

portant town in Greenland. A monthly newspaper is printed here in the native tongue. There is an indestructible stone building for the archives. There is the magnetic observatory of the Meteorological Institute of Copenhagen; a store; a log building built a hundred and fifty years ago by whalers; a wireless station; numerous official dwellings; a church—long and low like a bowling alley, with metal cuspidors strategically placed, one being directly beneath the pulpit; and against the water front are coal bunkers, for paradoxical as it sounds Greenland produces its own coal.

A half a mile west of the village is the Arctic station of Dr. Porsild. For nearly a third of a century he has devoted his life to the study of the flora and fossils of the country, not to mention its people, with the results that he is now the world's greatest living authority on the subject. Incidentally, a great deal more data has been collected about Greenland than one would naturally suppose—that is, if he is given to supposing about things like this. It is collected in a series of volumes published yearly by the Danish Government. So far there have been seventy.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

From this it may be judged how very jealous of Greenland the Danish Government is. It watches over its island possession with a vigilance that could be no more intense if inspired by mother love. So the official panic that must have followed the announcement of some scientists that the country had come loose from its moorings and was slipping south at a speed estimated as high as fifteen meters per year is easy to understand. Using this figure, a mere matter of cold mathematics gives the exact date Greenland will hit the Equator and the Eskimos become Hottentots. A sudden change like this would disturb the functioning of any government. Right off the colony would start exporting bananas instead of icebergs. That would mean new stationery and bill heads. Instead of clothing manufactured from the integuments of fur bearing animals, the better dressed native would go round in a pleasant smile and a coat of tan, necessitating an entirely new set of traffic regulations. And what would become of the Arctic Explorers!

That the Danish Government does not take the matter as a joke is evidenced by a copper plate sunk into a large granite boulder standing near the

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Governor's house. Using this as a base mark, an elaborate series of measurements are being made for the purpose of getting the facts.

There's irony in the very suggestion that Greenland is slipping down towards the tropics, for millions of years ago its own climate was subtropical; its atmosphere was moist and hot; its gentle contours covered with dense, bosky vegetation of the fern and palm type. Fossils prove it. Most anywhere around this neighborhood one may dig up beautifully preserved specimens of the bread fruit tree, tulip tree and fern fronds hardly distinguishable from those rustling today in the spicy breezes of the tropics. There are fossil twigs that fell from conifers identical to our giant redwoods of California. There are the massive stems of forest trees, and embedded sections of fig tree, cycad and magnolia.

The place had a prolific Carboniferous Period. Coal proves it. There is plenty of coal in the neighborhood. It may be more conspicuous for clinkers than heat units, but as one satisfied user puts it: "for purposes of fumigation, or even marine ballast, it can be highly recommended."

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Fossils have been found within five hundred miles of the North Pole, proving a hot past and that exhausts the subject of fossils, thank heaven.

But Godhavn is many-sided. Besides the geology there is a very brisk social life. This consists largely in dining back and forth. First, we dined the Governor, the Governor's lady and all his young. The banquet opened with considerable ceremony—a plate of scalding soup was spilled down the back of the Governor's lady. It terminated with a few selections by the ship's orchestra and a round of strong cigars.

Next we dined with the Governor. We had shrimps smothered in fish oil, followed by strips of white whale skin, breaded, and surrounded with mashed potatoes and peas. Then came a course of cheese, bread and butter, crab meat and herrings. For dessert, stewed apricots covered with grated nutmeg were served. Port wine, consumed with much ceremonious clicking of glasses, concluded the meal. The radishes, fresh from the hot-beds, and apollinaris, straight from Europe, must not be overlooked. An Eskimo girl in full costume functioned as first lady-in-waiting.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Among the guests were two Austrian scientists. They had come all the way to Greenland to hunt worms. They were Wormologists. "Already we have discovered twenty-five species of Arctic varieties," one of them stated with unconcealed pride.

"If they keep it up they'll have enough bait to go fishing," whispered the Cowboy.

"And we're almost on the track of a nemathelminth," the other added, which brought the conversation to an abrupt conclusion.

At Godhavn we met with our first disappointment. Here, Dr. Knud Rasmussen was to have joined us for the duration of the trip. But somehow he missed the connection, and in the North as time waits for no man we sailed away without him.

IV

As we pushed northward it was easy to realize that the phrase "there's one born every minute" refers solely to icebergs. Greenland's glaciers, ceaselessly slipping down to the sea, are the most prolific producers of icebergs in the world. There are eight berg-forming glaciers, most of them located in the neighborhood of Disco Bay.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

When a section of ice the size of a city block bursts from a glacier-face and floats majestically south, the circumstance is referred to as "whelping." These glaciers are the "White Mothers of the North." Their birth rate is phenomenal; their fecundity infinite; their labor is cosmic and accompanied by the thunder of chaos. They are brought to bed by the North Wind.

This is cold obstetrics. But the statement that the daily discharge of ice from Jakobshavn Glacier amounts to 432,000,000 cubic feet is even colder. "It's annual discharge would form a mountain two miles long, two broad and a thousand feet high," and just a short time ago what was bothering us was Greenland's hot past.

This crystalline flotilla crosses Baffin Bay, enters the Labrador Current and finally ends up cruising the North Atlantic steamer lanes in competition with legitimate ocean traffic. At this point they are taken in charge by two international patrol boats. Each berg is given a number and its exact latitude and longitude is broadcast at regular intervals. Thus, gradually wasting away they are chaperoned to tropical waters and oblivion.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

These offspring of the North Wind are of every conceivable shape and size and perform the most unexpected acrobatic feats, for the water lapping against their smooth flanks is constantly disturbing their centers of gravity. They stand this as long as they can, then, as though in desperation, they roll over into a new position. The result is a series of tidal waves, fierce enough to swamp a good-sized boat. They add a distinct zest to Arctic navigation.

We passed the entrance of Umanak fiord by picking our way gingerly through a maze of newly born bergs. In the summer the glacier at the head of this fiord is alleged to move at the rate of thirty-five feet a day—not a bad effort for solid ice. But strangely enough as we worked our way through this floating ice-box the day was clear and warm. Though the heat was not tropical, it was genial and relaxing. We were about twelve hundred miles from the Pole.

Svarten Huk, a promontory with black rock walls rising fifteen hundred feet sheer from the sea, sank below the southern horizon.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Now, for no reason at all, there was a brief visit to the town of Proven. It would be hard to imagine anybody stopping there for a definite reason, and unless its exact location is known to the last decimal point probably no place in the world is harder to find. The only sure method of locating it would be to sift the landscape through a fine-meshed sieve. For half an hour we combed the neighborhood without results. Then we discovered we'd been staring right into the middle of the town for ten minutes without seeing it. It was absolutely absorbed by its background of reddish rocks.

We landed to find the entire population down with a terrific community cold. It was harrowing. A deafening corporate sneeze following a merry canticle of perfectly timed barking filled one with the suspicion that he was about to become a playground for a select group of very athletic germs.

"We were all right here," the Manager explained, "until the Doctor called to make an inspection. He brought a cold with him and left it as a souvenir."

In one respect, however, Proven was to be highly

AN ARCTIC RODEO

commended. Not a single intoxicated dog was to be seen. They were denied the exhilarating effects of decomposed shark meat and kept in a state of Puritanical sobriety by the rigid enforcement of prohibition. Instead of turning the beach into a dog bar-room, deceased sharks were tied securely to the piling of the landing stage and forced to languish under water.

In this manner the cadavers of ten sleeper-sharks were filed for future reference. This was too much for the Zoologist. "The sleeper-shark is a very important problem," he insisted. "It ought to be looked into." So the largest and most wall-eyed specimen was turned over to him and he spent the rest of the night looking into it. If any uncertainty ever existed concerning the interior arrangements of the sleeper-shark he removed it. He removed its entire works, including its fins and sense of taste. He dismantled its motor, removed the carbon and pulled its fusilage to pieces.

"Its liver is six feet long," he announced excitedly.

"Is it torpid?" Pathé enquired, more or less interested for personal reasons.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

The Zoologist did not reply. He was busy packing the shark away in a barrel.

Before we left Proven we took a cup of coffee with the Manager and his wife. They were a very attractive young Danish couple, a long way from home. Among those present was a versatile Danish carpenter, who apparently was capable of handling anything from a church to a chicken coop in a constructive way. This time it was a church and, though he was provided with native assistants, he performed the duties of architect, foreman and skilled labor.

v

There were so many wild fowl near Proven we devoted a night to sport and then set out for Upernivik in an oleaginous bank of fog. Bergs loomed and vanished. The hours came and went. We bored our way through the blanket of opaque whiteness.

How anyone could navigate a vessel under such conditions was a mystery. Yet a moment came when some miraculous sixth sense seemed to warn the Skipper that we had about reached our des-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

tination. For some time he peered through the mist like a crystal gazer straining to read the unknown, then burst out with a few remarks that caused the resemblance to vanish. Slowing down to half speed he began cruising back and forth between two huge icebergs. They were grounded. Tidal marks had told him that. As long as we stood by them we wouldn't get lost, at any rate. They were dirty, disreputable looking bergs, but we clung to them as though they were the only friends we had left on earth.

Then suddenly the fog lifted. The sun warmed us and we found ourselves once more in a world of three dimensions. There, so near one could almost reach out and touch them, rose a line of perpendicular cliffs. The sea, as it dashed against the boulders at their base, broke into plumes of white foam. It was a nasty place. We had stopped just in time.

A kayaker came off to us. Upernivik lay a couple of miles south. Our clairvoyant Skipper had groped his way through one hundred and twenty-five miles of fog and come within two miles of making a bull's-eye. "That's nothing," he said.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

“Many a sealer used to go out from Newfoundland in the spring without sextant or compass even. They navigated by the touch and feel method and generally got home.”

CHAPTER IX

The man who spends his time sitting around listening to the hardening of his arteries is apt to lose his taste for any other kind of music.

PÉRE PLIMPTON.

I

UPERNIVIK is about 72° North and marks the limit of the Danish settlements in Greenland. It can claim the distinction of being the most northerly town in the world, for even Hammerfest, Norway, lags several degrees behind it.

We stayed at Upernivik long enough to have some kamiks, or native moccasins, made; to drink several gallons of ceremonial coffee; to see the Governor's dogs fed, and lastly to go to a dance.

The local shoemaker started out as a very model of efficiency, tracing the outlines of everyone's feet on numerous sheets of paper. But when he settled down to work, he evidently decided that any foot

AN ARCTIC RODEO

as large as most of those depicted in his drawings was a lie, and left everything to his imagination. As a result he turned out kamiks that would fit the child's-sized foot of a native but just about covered the large toe of an Anglo-Saxon.

We lunched with the Governor. The first course consisted of a glass of schnapps. This was followed by mixed vegetables en casserole and a glass of schnapps. Next came a glass of schnapps. Then there was schnapps. Now a small river of assorted calories flowed freely around the board: canned herring, lobster, sausage, pig's head cheese, black bread and thinly sliced auk's breast. Any taint of monotony was removed by a bottle of pale ale. A hard-boiled auk's egg was featured just before a series of toasts of courtesy to the world's illustrious dead. By the time the illustrious living were reached we were obliged to persuade the Governor to lump them into one sweeping gesture and let it go at that.

When we returned to the harbor the Cowboy squeezed himself into a kayak, and after telling the world that he was from Montana and could lick his weight in bulldogs, he announced successively that

AN ARCTIC RODEO

he was an Eskimo, Greta Garbo, a walrus, polar bear, sea lion, the reincarnation of General Grant, and then proceeded to attempt the native feat of turning completely over under water. It was a very creditable performance. He was just fifty per cent successful. The only hitch was, he remained permanently suspended upside down. An expressive series of bubbles began to rise to the surface. When it seemed as though there could not possibly be another bubble left in the Cowboy he was set right side up by a skiff.

On a small island not far from town the Governor kept his dogs during the summer. They were fed twice a week, the rest of the time fasting, or fishing along the shore for flotsam. As a result they resembled a pack of wolves ravened by hunger, rather than domesticated animals. We rowed over and watched them being fed. As we approached they rushed into the water to meet us in a frenzy of anticipation. While one native beat them off with a club, another landed carrying a basket of decomposed sea gulls.

A bird was thrown into the air. A savage, bloody battle followed. At a single gulp it finally vanished

AN ARCTIC RODEO

down the throat of the victor, claws, bill and all to the very last feather. Any dog fortunate enough to catch one on the wing, immediately stuck his head into the nearest small hole in the rocks and finished his meal in peace, in spite of the fact that the protruding tender portion of his anatomy was subjected to a continuous and brutal attack. It was a case of snap and swallow; a battle between winnowing jaws that would consume anything that had been in contact with flesh, human or otherwise. A glove was a delicacy; an old boot a titbit.

Eighty years ago Dr. Elisha Kent Kane complained bitterly of his deckload of dogs: "More bother with these wretched dogs! Worse than a street in Constantinople emptied upon our decks; the unruly, thieving, wild-beast pack! Not a bear's paw, or an Eskimo's cranium, or basket of mosses, or any specimen whatever, can leave your hands for a moment without their making a rush at it, and, after a yelping scramble, swallowing it at a gulp. I have seen them attempt a whole feather bed; and here, this very morning, one of my Karsuk brutes has eaten up two entire bird's-nests which I had just before gathered from the rocks: feathers, filth, peb-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

bles and moss—a peckful at least. One was a perfect specimen of the nest of the tridactyl, the other of the big burgomaster."

Anyone who has ever had his feather bed or favorite tridactyl nest eaten by dogs is bound to feel a certain sympathy for the Doctor. Yet the table manners of the descendants of his hungry canines show no improvement even today.¹

That evening we dined the Governor and his staff on the schooner. At the proper moment he proposed the health of the President of the United States in a foaming beaker of ginger ale. The orchestra played *America*, while on shore the Danish flag was dipped and there was a salute of three can-

¹ In my five years' work among these dogs I have failed to find the species described by writers as "treacherous" or "vicious" or "ugly brutes." On the contrary, the full-blooded Eskimo dog is one of the most affectionate in the world. A hundred or more were often about our door. My men passed in and out among them without the least fear. Two hundred and fifty were berthed on the deck of the *Roosevelt*. To walk forward it was often necessary to push them aside with the knees. Not a man was ever bitten. No man, woman or child in the far North has ever been attacked, and not more than three or four in the whole tribe have ever been bitten.

These dogs are supposed to be the direct descendants of the northern gray or white wolf. DONALD B. MACMILLAN.

(In California there's a man who makes a living raising lions for the movies. He holds the same views with regard to the affectionate nature of his pets.)

AN ARCTIC RODEO

non shots. The health of the King of Denmark naturally followed, and now the orchestra found itself in a very embarrassing position. It was up to us to produce the Danish National Anthem—but nobody knew it. Nobody could even hum it. The international situation was only saved from complete dislocation by the Cowboy's discovery of a Danish hymn in a collection of songs called "Heart-throbs." The Archer could read notes, so he picked out the air and we followed by ear, but not so closed as to make the results monotonous.

A dance followed on shore in a small building used for a carpenter shop. Dancing is the one dissipation the country affords. It is at once a national pastime and a test of physical endurance. At one place a dance was started as soon as we dropped anchor and three days later when we left it was still going strong. The rhythm seems to exert a hypnotic influence; momentarily the hardness of life vanishes; the gyrating couples, in their garments of skin, float round and round in an ambrosial whirlpool of forgetfulness.

In a room not over twenty feet square at least fifty couples took the floor. This was possible only

AN ARCTIC RODEO

because the dances were so designed that the whole mass revolved like a cartwheel, each variation in step being performed in unison. The music was supplied by a "push and pull," which was passed from hand to hand, insuring a fair division of the musical assets of the gathering. At intervals a musician would declare an extra dividend in the shape of an original arpeggio or diatonic fugue weird enough to raise goose pimples on a slab of granite. The men, in woolen caps and skin clothes, danced sincerely and perspired freely. The atmosphere grew blue, finally you could grab hold of it most anywhere and chin yourself on it. The dance was now off to a good start.

Our particular dance would probably have run on until the village was on the verge of starvation, but one of the boys suddenly appeared with a carton of cigarettes which he proceeded to give away. Such a rough and tumble followed, the spell was broken—so were most of the windows—and we all went to bed, after a few cups of coffee with the Governor, thoroughly relaxed.

A few hours later we left for Cape York. The Governor, with most of the flower and chivalry of

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Upernivik, accompanied us out of the harbor. The cannon gave a terrific boom, then remained silent. The Governor apologized for the brevity of the salute and explained that as he had only a few handfuls of powder left he had concentrated it all in one loud report rather than the proper number of weak ones.

At length he stepped into his official barge and left us. As he stood in the stern waving his hat, several of the boys gave him a farewell salute with shotguns. It was very effective, except for the fact they were so anxious to see everything that was going on they let off their volley straight at him. The shot spattered in the water all about him. He was grand. He never flickered an eyelash and relieved our embarrassment by throwing off the impression that as far as he was concerned we could have paid him no greater international compliment than a good dusting with a shotgun.

It was a beautiful afternoon. Around us floated countless bergs. Behind us Saunders Hope, a huge conical rock, reared its snowy summit four thousand feet into the clear air. Before us lay dreaded Melville Bay, known to the old whalers as "the sailor's

AN ARCTIC RODEO

graveyard." We had cast off the shackles of civilization. Someone started the victrola playing. Billy the Cook went below and boiled potatoes. Where another might relieve his emotions by playing the zither or reading Wadsworth, Billy found a perfect peace in the simple manipulation of a kettle of boiling water and a peck of tubers.

II

Just before one plunges into the unknown terrors of Melville Bay he is apt to pause at Duck Islands. They are strategically located at the very edge of the great jump and offer a fine take off. Explorers following the American Route toward the Pole have stopped there ever since exploring became a recognized profession, while for a hundred years they have served as a rendezvous for whalers.

There is another good reason for stopping at Duck Islands. They are the breeding grounds for countless thousands of eider ducks, and all one has to do is go ashore with a basket and pick eggs until he is tired.

The eider duck very foolishly nests on the ground. After selecting what it considers a nice soft patch

AN ARCTIC RODEO

of rock, it tears the down from its breast and builds a nest. Then it lays about seven eggs, each one the size of a small orange. Of course the number varies according to how ambitious the bird is. When one approaches a nest, the bird pulls the down over the eggs and scuttles away in an effort to lure one in the wrong direction. From this the simplicity of egg picking on the Duck Islands is easily understood.

In the summer the Eskimos collect huge caches of eggs, and then when winter jades their appetites they drive out over the ice and have an orgy. By then the eggs have become fairly sulphurous, so the result might be termed a form of Eskimo caviar. We found several such caches and the Archer, who is something of a gastronomic adventurer, tried a few eggs on the hoof so to speak. The first two were a great success. "They taste just like cod-liver oil," he reported enthusiastically. The third was evidently the result of a misunderstanding on the part of the duck, so we received no precise report on it.

Thousands of birds filled the air and as many more were "strutting their stuff"— as the Cabin

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Boy expressed it—around their nests. And yet according to the Skipper their numbers were nothing in comparison with the old days. A few years more of indiscriminate slaughter and egg raping will doubtless finish them.

There were numerous blinds used by the natives in shooting the birds. In front of one, a live bird had been tethered to a stake by a leather thong attached to its leg. The hunter had departed in due course but neglected to release the decoy which was in the last stages of starvation. This seemed a further prophecy of speedy annihilation.

It was most interesting to find a nest in which the goslings were in the act of pecking their way through the shell. The sight roused the maternal instinct in all of us and a nest, the eggs of which were in a very interesting condition, was brought on board and put behind the galley stove. The results were awaited with feverish interest by all.

In the course of our brief wanderings we found ourselves at one point standing beside the grave of William Stewart, A. B., of the S.S. *Triune*, Dundee. William died June 11, 1886, of scurvy. The statement seems devoid of interest. Nobody cares.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

And therein lies its melancholy. All that remains of Stewart, who died of scurvy so long ago, lies in this howling wilderness attended only by eider ducks—and nobody cares. We turned away. We were breaking our own heart.

The night that followed was the noisiest of the whole trip. It was entirely filled with the music of popping shotguns, goings, comings, excursions and alarms. Someone brought in a raven—and made a song about it; another bagged an ivory gull and relieved himself of a whole Grand Opera.

III

We were about to plunge into Melville Bay, a region that has caused moments of misgivings to some of the world's stoutest hearts. "Sixteen miles north to Duck Islands we met the dreaded Melville Bay pack," writes Peary. Again he makes a terse entry: "baffled by the ice of Melville Bay," and he continued so baffled from July 3rd to 21st. This kind of thing is not designed to encourage the ordinary traveler. He refers to it again as an "icy, bear-haunted waste."

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Doctor Kane is not much of a help either. "Since the year 1819," he writes, "from which we may date the opening of Melville Bay, no less than 210 vessels have been destroyed in attempting its passage." Again, "the bergs which infest this region have earned for it among the whalers the title of 'Bergy Hole.'" At one point, however, he becomes almost poetic. His brig is beset in the middle of the bay when 'the midnight sun came out over the northern crest of the great berg kindling variously-colored fires on every part of its surface, making the ice around us one great resplendency of gem work, blazing carbuncles and rubies and molten gold—' He heightens the illusion considerably by adding "Our brig went crunching through all this jewelry—" and so on into a lot more trouble.

Full of grim determination we plunged into the "sailor's graveyard." If we had possessed any no doubt a double ration of grog would have been served in the crisis to strengthen our fortitude. Thirty-six hours later we lay off Cape York. Melville Bay was behind us. The Mediterranean in June is often much colder. There wasn't a piece of

AN ARCTIC RODEO

ice to be seen even the size of a pea. The Bergy Hole had borne a strange resemblance to a Venetian lagoon. The Zoologist passed the time blowing eider duck eggs.

CHAPTER X

He thinks ill of me and I think well of him, very possibly we are both wrong.

VOLTAIRE.

I

WE were making a very fair supper on roast eider duck, rice, boiled potatoes, tea and prunes, when someone yelled through the skylight that he could almost reach out with a boat hook and touch Cape York. With hardly any hesitation most of us decided to swap our prunes for a view and climbed on deck.

It was worth it. A great majestic headland, somberly tinted with soft, delicate colors, towered fifteen hundred feet above us. Patches of funereal black where the lichens covered its rocks were relieved by virginal green streaks of new grass, while, in sheltered ravines protected from the rays of the sun, tongues of snow were tinged red by some strange algæ. Ruskin might have described it as "a constant-hearted headland en-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

trusted with the weaving of the dark eternal tapestry of the hills." He did such things on occasion.

Blue bergs floated past us. To the east a vast bay, studded with bergs and pan ice, stretched into the distance, its rim inlaid with monumental glaciers. In the extreme distance the sun glistened on the Ice Cap of Greenland. There may be wilder scenery on the earth's crust, but it hardly seems probable.

Perpendicular rock walls beetled over our heads. Myriads of little auks filled the air with chatter. Guillemots and eider ducks shot past, as full of purpose as though they knew exactly where they were going. Several seals rose half out of the water and gazed at us with round, moist eyes. We were at the edge of Admiral Peary's Arctic Oasis, the home of the Smith Sound Eskimos.

We were three thousand miles distant from New York by sea; twenty-two hundred by air; by wireless, a second or two; but in social and geographical characteristics about thirty-two million light years. Time had been suddenly thrown into reverse. Without any warning we found ourselves living in the middle of the last glacial period.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Even the Skipper was mildly excited, for Cape York was the Mecca of his dreams.

“It’s the greatest headland in the world,” he enthused. “Think of the men who’ve weathered it in times past! Bylot and Baffin in 1616. Then each year the old whalers on their way to Lancaster Sound; and lastly the ships of every Smith Sound Expedition from the very beginning. If that rock had the gift of speech it could tell a tale of real men.”

We wove our way between the bergs to the foot of the glacier that dips into the Bay behind the Cape. Our water-barrels needed filling. For some time the shore seemed deserted, then four kayakers shot over the smooth water and the next moment we were shaking hands with our first Arctic Highlanders.

The Skipper, old Tom Gushue and Billy the Cook scanned the group closely for familiar faces without results. These men had been children when they last saw them. Though little men, not over five feet five in height, with child’s-sized hands and feet, our guests radiated good health. This was no debile race of voluptuaries. They wore

AN ARCTIC RODEO

their hair long. They dressed in cotton shirts, bearskin trousers and white kamiks of sealskin. One of them looked like a negro, the rest unostentatiously suggested a Mongolian ancestry. We enquired where their village was. They pointed toward shore, and there nestling against the rocky withers of the Cape were a dozen skin tents.

Now a small squadron of kayaks surrounded us and some rather spirited trading set in. But before probing the question of commerce, as practiced at Cape York, it might be well to glance at the spiritual and temporal condition of the Smith Sound Eskimos as Peary found it some years ago. At that time they had but two objects in life: securing something to eat, and the wherewithal to clothe themselves. Their sole occupation consisted in the struggle for these objects. There was no time left for persiflage.

They were without:

Government

Religion

Salt, pepper or other condiments

Written language

Stimulants, narcotics, drugs

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Money or standard of value

Food, except { blood
blubber
meat

Any edible substance of vegetable origin
(they didn't have any vegetables)

and Property, except { clothing
hunting equipment
traveling equipment
skin tents

On the positive side they were:

Intelligent

Ingenious

Thoroughly human

Men of iron with respect to their

disregard of { cold
hunger
fatigue¹

¹The Smith Sound Eskimo is unacquainted with alcohol in any form and probably it is all for the best. In the winter of 1916 Commander Fitzhugh Green became lost in Melville Bay with three Eskimos. The thermometer stood 48 degrees below zero. The continuous darkness of the Polar Night enveloped them. "For three years," he said, "I had carried a pint flask of Navy whiskey for emergencies. It looked as though the emergency had at last arrived, as the Eskimos Arklio, Kooloointingwah and Nucartingwah were on the point of deserting. We were perishing with cold. The food was gone. To cheer them up I divided the pint into four portions; and

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Every man was his own master and supreme in his own family. There were no vested interests, unearned increments or land barons. The whole country belonged to everybody. Products of the chase, such as seal, walrus, narwhal, etc., were divided on a beautiful system of communism. The smaller animals alone belonged exclusively to the hunter.

They were highly intelligent in the construction and use of implements of the chase; and, while their style of beauty was Mongolian, they possessed the Oriental qualities of mimicry, ingenuity and patience in mechanical duplication.

As a tribe they only numbered about two hundred and fifty, counting the noses of men, women and children. Their range was the coastal fringe between Cape York on the south to Kane Basin

after I had tossed mine off to satisfy them there wasn't a devil in the bottle, they drank theirs. The results were unexpected. For thirty seconds they stood and looked at each other in a dazed way. Then Kooloointwah threw himself on the ice and uttered a yell they must have heard at Upernivik. For a moment the other two looked at him in amazement. Suddenly Arklio grabbed up an 18-foot dog whip and started cracking it in all directions, screaming like a demon. Next Nucartingwah flung his arms into the air and in a series of terrific monkey jumps hid behind some bergs."

Reflexes like these do not make for conviviality.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

on the north—a matter of two hundred and thirty-five miles. “They are at once the smallest, most northerly and most unique tribe upon the earth,” the Admiral goes on to say, and are more or less imprisoned in their environment by “the Great Ice to the East, the waves of Smith Sound to the West, to the North the crystal ramparts of Humboldt Glacier and the stretching miles of the unknown glaciers of Melville Bay to the South.” There certainly doesn’t seem much chance of breaking out of that ice box and becoming a nomad.

It is obvious that trade with such a people is reduced to its simplest terms. You can’t trade them out of their government, religion, salt, pepper or vegetables if they haven’t any. All that remains is their hunting and traveling equipment, and thus a curious situation is created. For example, formerly wood was non-existent. “A man,” says Peary, “offered me his dogs and sledge and all his furs for a bit of board as long as himself; another offered me his wife and two children for a shining knife, and a woman offered me everything she had for a needle.” The hunter would

AN ARCTIC RODEO

find himself with a plank "as long as himself" and no means of reaching his hunting grounds. He would starve to death. The woman might trade all her clothes for a needle and freeze to death gloriously, clutching the tiny symbol of civilization. A pail of candy is inducement enough to cause them to part with anything they've got. The candy vanishes, leaving them nothing with which to combat cold and hunger but a newly acquired sweet tooth.

In order to avoid such a contingency, George had provided a large supply of wood, strips of iron, woolen clothing and numerous other items, so that anyone relieved of a necessity would receive its equivalent in raw material.

Among the trade goods was a stand of Krag rifles with suitable ammunition. Exactly what epoch they belonged to we were never able to discover, but they were old enough to vote, and had undoubtedly cast their bullets in many a friendly referendum. From their general appearance they might have resulted from the illicit union of a blunderbuss and a bow and arrow. There was a temperamental quality about them suggesting that

AN ARCTIC RODEO

their morals and bolt actions were both thoroughly loose. They looked blasé and world weary, as though they didn't care which way they went off.

Our first commercial transaction involved the exchange of some wood, iron, a Krag rifle and a red sweater for a fully equipped kayak. The trade dragged a bit, however, so it became necessary to work up a little enthusiasm on the part of the seller.

"That's easy," said George. "You and the Archer take a couple of Krags and give 'em a demonstration."

For our part we never cared less about giving a demonstration, but much to our surprise the guns did not burst and we filled a small iceberg so full of lead it tipped over. The Eskimos now fired a few rounds, and when they saw their bullets splash in the water several hundred yards away their delight was vociferous. From then on trading was merely a matter of give and take.

II

Most of us went ashore to see what the town would afford. The colony consisted of two canvas

AN ARCTIC RODEO

tents, six skin tents with windows of seal intestine, innumerable dogs and a remarkable assortment of well-picked bones.

The whole population at once surrounded us. Personally, instead of a well filled pocketbook, we carried a pail containing thirty-five pounds of hard candy. As currency it was far more effective. What we particularly wanted was a complete woman's costume. This consists of a pair of moccasins, reaching considerably above the knee, with an inner lining of reindeer skin and tops embellished with the long hair of the polar bear; a pair of trunks fashioned from the pelts of the Arctic hare; a birdskin shirt; a gingham blouse for summer wear and a "kootlatah" of blue foxskin for protection against the winter's zephyrs.

Selecting a young lady whose garments seemed quite new and not unduly fragrant, we opened negotiations. First, it was necessary to convey the idea to her that we wanted to purchase the clothes off her back. Just try and express this to a lady in sign language sometime and you will at once understand the difficulties under which explorers have to work. That settled, we proceeded to the

AN ARCTIC RODEO

discussion of terms. One double handful of candy was subtracted from the pail and laid on a flat rock. This merely moved her to screams of derisive laughter. A second, third and fourth handful caused her mirth to taper off somewhat. The fifth, sixth and seventh produced a visible effect. There was really quite a decent pile of candy on the rock by now. She grew serious with the eighth, ninth and tenth; showed signs of slipping at the eleventh and with the twelfth her resistance snapped, and with an hysterical cry she vanished into the nearest skin tent. We had found her price! Twelve double handfuls of hard candy. She was back in a jiffy dressed in her second best, delivered her wardrobe and started eating her bank balance.

As soon as she cashed in her clothes every woman in the place crowded around and wanted to trade. Fifty pounds of gum drops would have stripped the whole village.

We entered one of the skin tents. The rear half of it was given over to the bed-platforms, which was plentifully supplied with the peltry of both the reindeer and bear. There were also a couple

AN ARCTIC RODEO

of very decent looking steamer rugs and a couple of dormant alarm clocks that were very evidently not endemic to the region. On either side of the entrance burned blubber lamps—shallow stone receptacles in which a small piece of moss floated in a bath of seal oil. When lit, the moss produced a flame about the size of one's thumb, a great deal of carbon monoxide and its own weight in soot. Near the door hung a large slab of raw seal beef, flanked on either side by strips of blubber. As one entered or left the tent, if the spirit moved him, he hacked off a wog of each and enjoyed a little snack. Raw seal meat is far from unpalatable, provided it is not too prehistoric. In flavor it somewhat resembles raw beef, and when skillfully mingled with blubber the resemblance is striking. At first blush its consumption might indicate a highly developed gastronomic fortitude, but anyone who has mastered the artichoke and alligator pear could soon acquire a taste for it.

The floor of the tupik was a mire littered with this and that. Several white enameled pans and saucers bore witness to the encroachment of civilization. The glamor of the past was yielding to the

AN ARCTIC RODEO

gadgets of the present. Looking strangely out of place a few cakes of highly scented soap stood out conspicuously. For some reason the Eskimo appears to have developed a passion for this simple toilet accessory. It is the Arctic equivalent of the "mess of pottage." For one cake he will shoot the works: for two, he will fight a polar bear single-handed, and though it is rarely used except for ornamental purposes, on festive occasions it is eaten with considerable ceremony. Further than that this particular tupik was tastefully decorated with fragments of female attire such as was considered chic some years ago. We are no antiquary, so if we did not see a camisole, petticoat and pair of corsets with ribs of whale bone dangling from that roof tree, the misunderstanding must be put down to ignorance.

The sun came out and warmed up the roof of the dwelling. The heat grew stifling. The flavor of crudely cured seal skins rose to epic proportions. In a case like that the shortest distance between two points is not short enough.

The keynote of the settlement was dogs—large, hungry, wolflike dogs. They were tethered all

AN ARCTIC RODEO

over the place in surly teams of from twelve to fourteen. Gaunt females with litters of round fury pups glared at one with baleful eyes. In the midst of these snapping fangs tumbled a bumper crop of young Eskimo children—unwashed and happy.

As juvenile aborigines they were correctly dressed in miniature bearskin trousers, tiny kamiks and sealskin koolatahs, and though but scraps of Arctic humanity their time was already fully occupied learning to combat their environment. Some threw small harpoons, others shot half portion arrows into the air, but the most popular sport was whip cracking. Additions to the population so recent as to be distinctly unsteady on their legs would make a manful effort at snapping a small whip and inevitably end up in a heap. Whips with eighteen foot lashes lay everywhere. Man, woman or child with a moment to spare just naturally reached for one and let it off with a report like a pistol. Flicking at distant objects was a national sport.

When transporting her young a woman looked like a kangaroo whose pouch had slipped around to

AN ARCTIC RODEO

the back of its neck. And when one of these human marsupials loomed in the offing with the head of her favorite infant sticking out of her collar band, Milton's lines in *Samson Agonistes* were strangely significant:

But what is this? What thing of sea or land?
Female of sex it seems,
That so bedecked, ornate, and gay,
Comes this way, sailing like a stately ship. . . .

. . . . *

An amber scent of odoriferous perfume
Her harbinger.

On one point, however, we were all unanimous as we rowed off to the schooner late that night: we had reached a land the prevailing note of which was, happiness and contentment.

III

A Bedouin will make a non-stop journey from the cradle to the grave on a diet of dates; a Hottentot will live indefinitely on the whiff of an oily rag; the Masai developed into the greatest tribe of fighters Africa ever produced on a regimen con-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

sisting exclusively of mingled blood and milk; in Biblical times locusts and wild honey were considered hearty food; in fact, the list of freak eaters may be prolonged to the point where one begins to wonder whether a balanced diet isn't just a dining car waiter carrying a tray full of food over a rough road bed.

Most of us spend a great deal of time balancing our diet. It's the great American pastime. Generally we sit down to our mulligatawny soup, hasenpfeffer and pêche melba with the silent prayer that good digestion will wait on appetite and the doctor on all three of us. Many of us are such poor jugglers, however, we've given up trying to balance our diets and resigned ourselves to accepting bulk deliveries of whatever falls out of the fry-pan. If anything goes wrong we can always blame it on our glands.

As far as the Smith Sound Eskimo goes he only increases the confusion of the caloric mystery. With a few exceptions he lives almost exclusively on meat, and lacking condiments he is apt to relieve the monotony by holding everything back until it becomes fairly putrid—just as we do with cheese

AN ARCTIC RODEO

and game birds. He is a thorough master of the art of epicurean decomposition.

Nothing could be simpler than his bill of fare. It consists of seal, walrus, white whale, narwhal, bear, fox, Arctic hare, birds and eggs from the rookeries, and in the old days, reindeer and an occasional musk-ox. His nearest approach to a vegetable dinner was the contents of the reindeer's stomach, which was usually found to be full of reindeer moss, while the walrus, living as they do on clams dug from the mud along the glacier fronts, also supply an occasional marine touch from the same anatomical region.

Nature is considerate to them in one respect, however. Their sole occupation consisting in the accumulation of food and clothing, very often they are able to lay in a supply of both simultaneously. When a man spears a polar bear he not only brings home his dinner, but a pair of trousers as well. Every time he goes out to shoot the baby a new sealskin shirt he brings home a beef stew, in a manner of speaking. So there are compensations.

The seal, walrus, white whale and narwhal are thrifty animals. They all suckle their young. The

AN ARCTIC RODEO

only practical effect of this is to oblige one to refer to them as "mammals," and their flesh as "meat" or "beef." However the Eskimo is neither interested in their maternal eccentricities, nor its effect on the English language: all he knows is, they are good to eat.

Naturally we were all much concerned with the subject of how the Eskimo catches up on his food and clothing. It is a simple matter to plunder a bird rookery, and as for eider ducks with their nests on the ground, they were just begging for immolation. But what arrangements did they make with the other animals? In this connection at Cape York we were able to check off the little auk or dovskie.

The rocky talus slopes of Cape York are famous for little auks. Even as far back as 1818 Captain Ross made much of them, sending off "two boats to procure as many birds as possible, for the purpose of preserving them in ice." After hardly any work at all "they returned at midnight with a boatload of about fifteen hundred, having on an average killed about fifteen at each shot." Upon experiment "they were found to make excellent soup—not inferior to hare soup," entirely without "the fishy

AN ARCTIC RODEO

flavor that might be expected from their food, which consists of crustacea, small fishes, mollusca or marine vegetables." He also speaks of a gull they shot that was "two feet five inches in length, which when killed disgorged a little auk entire," but this has nothing to do with the subject except to show what little auks have to put up with at times.

Snaring the little auk is no mean sport. One crouches in a hole in the rocks, with a net on the end of a ten-foot pole not unlike an elongated tennis racket, and swats them as they whizz past. It is really much harder than it sounds. They are skillful dodgers, and timing the stroke so that it does more than dislodge a few tail feathers takes several rehearsals. When one is proficient as many as a dozen birds may be collected per swat.

We first played this form of Arctic tennis with George and the Cabin Boy at Cape York, and though in this case the ball was covered with feathers and our racket handle was ten feet long we all reacted the same as if we were playing a set match at a Country Club before a gallery of connoisseurs. Every time we swung at a covey and

AN ARCTIC RODEO

missed we drew the net in and examined it carefully to see if there wasn't a hole in it.

The little auk is about as big as a stunted robin. They swarm over the talus slopes like bees, and when they feel so inclined they lay one solitary egg deep down among the rocks. According to one authority, the Eskimos either eat the little auk raw on the spot, consuming as many as ten or twelve at one session, take them home and boil them, or cache them uncleaned by the thousand "to season for the midwinter feasts." On such occasions they are merely peeled like walnuts and served as an appetizer. "The skins," he says, "are sucked to remove the fat, softened by rubbing, then cut and sewed together into the warm birdskin shirts once so common, but now replaced by the white man's shirt of the trade list." These birdskin shirts were worn with the feathers next to the skin of the wearer.

IV

Shortly after our tournament with the little auks the schooner was worked into Cape York Bay and clamped, by means of ice anchors, to the edge of

AN ARCTIC RODEO

the rotten bay-ice. As we stood next the rail and gazed across its white expanse, our attention was attracted to numerous small black specks dotting its surface two or three miles to the north.

“Poosee,” the Skipper volunteered, waving casually towards them.

“What do you mean, ‘Arctic cats’?” enquired the Doc.

“No, no, no!” he answered shortly. “Poosee. Poosee. You know. Seals sleeping by their blow holes.”

“Not a bad chance for a fellow to sneak up and shoot himself a vest or pair of trousers,” we suggested.

“Boy,” said the Skipper not unkindly, “I’ve got a thousand dollars in the bank, and that’s all I’ve got, but I’m willing to bet the lot you can’t get within a quarter of a mile of a seal by stalking it over the ice. Those seals are balanced on the edge of their blow holes so accurately they can dive under the ice quicker than the eye can follow them. Their entire lives are spent escaping enemies. They sleep with their ears open. They’re set like a hair trigger—ready to go off at a moment’s notice. They

AN ARCTIC RODEO

can hear your heart beat at two hundred yards. Boy, they're sinigssakangninguek," and without waiting for an answer he disappeared into the after-cabin for a few hours well-earned rest.

By now we were fairly interested, and noticing the head of Billy the Cook projecting above the forecastle hatch we moved over towards it.

"Hey, is it true those seals are sinigssakangninguek?" we asked.

"Maybe," answered the head.

"Well, how do they get that way?"

"It's what the Eskimos call it up here when you can't sleep."

"Sort of an Arctic insomnia?"

"Maybe."

"Is it any use going after them?"

"Maybe. If you take an Eskimo along to get you close and shoot 'em in the brain so they can't wiggle."

This sounded practical and constructive.

Expressing very little enthusiasm, an Eskimo finally agreed to steer us, and with no enthusiasm whatever we followed him out over the ice. The ice was exceedingly rotten and half submerged un-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

der puddles and miniature lakes, while at artistic intervals it was bisected by open leads over which it was impossible to jump. In such cases one went round or found a spot narrow enough to be overcome by an acrobatic leap. It only took a hundred yards of this traveling to convince us that if it's hard to imitate a gazelle on dry land, on rotten ice it's next to impossible.

The Eskimo carried a harpoon, the detachable tip of which was fastened to the end of a coiled rope cut from the skin of a bearded seal. We were armed with a rifle. By means of sign language our guide, counselor and friend described the procedure. It was simplicity itself. We were to creep up on the sleeping seal (business of men creeping and seal sleeping). At the psychological moment we were to plug him in the brain (business of bang, bang, and shattered seal cranium). After this a seal with any sense of decency would lie quiescently on the edge of its blow hole. However, if it fell into the water and started to sink beneath the ice, Terwilliger would rush in, harpoon it and pull it ashore with the hide rope. That was all there was to it.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

For the first quarter of a mile we kept fairly dry. Then in springing over a pot hole the ice gave way; we went in, climbed out, paused on the edge to shake ourself, slipped, sat down, stood up, sat down, slid ten feet in a sort of shoot and landed in the middle of an abandoned blow hole. It sounds like a farcical proceeding and that's exactly what it was. Terwhilliger pulled us out on the end of his harpoon. We began to feel like a trout.

The dark spots resting on their beds of ice grew larger—took on definite character. Soon we were only a few hundred yards from the nearest. Now Terwhilliger motioned us behind him, indicating that we should step in his footprints and do exactly as he did. We clung to him closer than his own shadow, enveloped in the pungency of his wet skin garments. As we wove our way between the puddles, the seal showed a lack of interest that was almost disappointing, until one suddenly raised its head and regarded us with round dreamy eyes. Just as suddenly Terwhilliger halted without going through the formality of taking us into his confidence. The result was inevitable. We climbed half way up his back. Now he proceeded to utter

AN ARCTIC RODEO

a curious bubbling sound in his throat, repeating it again and again like a refrain, until our victim, evidently affected by soporific hypnotism, relaxed, yawned and finally settled down for another nap. It was the native's remarkably lifelike imitation of a seal "blowing." Terwhilliger had been talking to that seal like a father. He had given it the latest submarine gossip, laced with a scandal or two and finally launched into a story pointless and long-winded enough to put even a seal to sleep. While all this was going on we were standing in the middle of a large lake of ice water.

Now he motioned us to shoot, but just as we raised the rifle the seal opened an eye, winked twice and disappeared down its blow hole quicker than thought. From all appearances the incident was closed.

Yet, while we stood looking at the concentric rings left in the water by its sudden plunge, up came its head again. It seemed completely dazed and baffled. It gazed at us with incredulous eyes, unable to leave the neighborhood without assuring itself the whole affair wasn't a nightmare. In turn, we became bewitched by the spell of its soul-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

ful eyes, almost embarrassed, helplessly impotent. Then venting its displeasure in a throaty hiss it disappeared for good.

The next seal slept so soundly it never knew what hit it. From a small round hole in its neck a thin crimson trickle formed a gruesome pattern on crystalline ice. Terwhilliger, with a cry of delight, gave an amazing series of monkey jumps—the Arctic method of expressing keen satisfaction. We had swapped a bullet for blubber, meat and a new shirt. The day's marketing had been accomplished. For him it was good—but for the seal lying dead on the ice with a bullet in its brain, it was bad. But then you can't please everybody.

Our last victim was shot while in the water, harpooned by Terwhilliger just as it was sinking and jerked out on the ice in an exceedingly skillful manner. This time both of us collaborated in celebrating the feat with a series of monkey jumps and volley of loud yells.

The two seals were now strung on the end of the harpoon line, and dragging them behind us we set out for the schooner. Five miles of Venetian lagoons lay before us. The excitement was over. The

AN ARCTIC RODEO

seals seemed to weigh about a ton apiece. For no reason at all a light shower came up. Perspiration streamed from us. The hotter Terwilliger grew the more overpowering became the personal incense that arose like steam from his clothing. We stopped feeling like a trout. Our sensations were more suggestive of a Belgian truck horse that had become too discouraged to whinny. For a very small cash consideration we would have sold the whole of Greenland and thrown in the Smith Sound Eskimos as a bonus. By the time we reached the schooner all the hair had worn off the seals' skins and most of the skin off our hands. That night we slightly sinigssakangninguek on our own account.

v

In these regions the seal has but two enemies, man and the polar bear, the one about as predatory as the other. The Eskimo either sits patiently by a blow hole and waits for the seal to come up for air, or stalks it as it lies sleeping on the ice, often pushing before him as a blind a piece of white

AN ARCTIC RODEO

cloth attached to runners. The seal careless enough to drowse on a floating ice-pan where the hunter can approach in a kayak is merely courting death, for then the approach is absolutely noiseless.

The tactics employed by the polar bear are identical. One Arctic authority even claims to have watched a bear stalk a seal by pushing a good-sized cake of ice before him as a screen. Another reports that occasionally a bear will dive under the ice and come up through the very blow hole beside which the seal is snatching a few winks, thus blocking its only exit. There are only two kinds of lies —damn lies, and those that get found out.

However, the bears are not always successful in the hunt. In fact, there are periods when they seem to exist entirely on their imaginations and shelf hardware. We have the word of one deeply interested in the subject that the stomachs of thirty bears revealed the following items: "seal beef, grass, seaweed, paper, manila rope yarn, a lump of hard woven fabric, horse dung, mackintosh sheeting, canvas, basaltic pebbles and bear blubber." This is the kind of food that is apt to stay with you.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

VI

Passing forever from the subject of seals, it might not be out of place to note that of all Arctic animals one of the most important to the Eskimo is the polar bear. It supplies food; while its skin, according to experts, is far and away the best sleeping robe for low temperatures. Again, from the skins of young bear the famous trousers are manufactured, without which the aborigine would have great difficulty in combating his environment; and they still remain the only practical pantaloons, in spite of the fact that in the winter the snow sticks to them and has to be beaten off every night with a bone instrument shaped like a sickle, called a "snow beater." Lastly, the hair will not fall out!

Bears are strong swimmers, but don't often dive. They possess a keen sense of smell and a distinct sense of humor. On several occasions the Skipper has had bears enter his camp and completely ignore him. They seemed utterly oblivious of the savageness of man.

There are more bear stories floating around loose in the Arctic than icebergs.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

VII

It was a beautiful, soft evening, almost spring-like, as we cruised slowly past the so-called "Crimson Cliffs"¹ of Captain Ross. The name suggests something vividly incarnadined and striking. One has a right to expect it. The reality, however, leaves everything to the imagination. It is merely another case of too much name. To be sure, where the tentacles of snow reached down the ravines there were traces of a faint anæmic blush, but nothing red or blowzy. The outstanding color tone was compounded of mud and dust. The small algæ that are supposed to spend their lives tinting the snow had evidently run out of raw material.

At four A.M. we anchored in a beautiful miniature bay called Parker Snow Bay, and caught a glimpse of our first Arctic oasis.

Between two narrow rocky walls some twelve hundred feet high the snout of a glacier pushed its

¹ Samuel M. Smucker says: "According to Barrow there was nothing new in the discovery of red snow. Pliny and other writers of his time mention it. Saussure found it in various parts of the Alps; Martin found it in Spitzbergen, and no doubt it is to be met with in most Alpine regions." Someone is always taking the joy out of life.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

way to within a few hundred yards of the beach. For twenty-four hours a day the sun beat down into this narrow pocket from a sky of Mediterranean blue. The heat was uncomfortable. The sound of running water filled the air. Each edge of the glacier, where it pulverized its rocky retaining walls, was carpeted with brilliant green grass. There were multitudes of flowers. House-flies buzzed about on professional errands. Little auks twittered. Up on the hillside a blue fox sat at the entrance to his burrow and complained loudly. It was a bucolic scene, lush and bosky.

In such spots one will find timothy, cotton grass, mustard, pinks, saxifrages, buttercups and roses; their pinks, whites, yellows and purples turning the earth into a gorgeous tapestry. The real Arctic enthusiast will yodel for hours about the flaming tints of the louseworts and yellow poppies; about how they vie in conspicuousness with the cotton grass, dandelions and bluebells.

Regrettable as it is, the fact remains that these Arctic flowers are entirely lacking in perfume. The summers are so scandalously short such frivolity is out of the question. The vegetation, which is

AN ARCTIC RODEO

of the lilliputian variety, develops with explosive suddenness. So much has to be accomplished in a short time it practically becomes necessary for a plant to bud, blossom and fructify simultaneously. Flies, bees, gnats, butterflies and spiders offer gratuitous assistance in the pollination.

And speaking of flowers, there are no rats, mice or snakes. The only plant of practical value in this whole catalogue of herbage is the timothy hay. This is collected periodically with enthusiasm and used wherever the absorption of moisture is important. It is excellent material for boot stuffing, mattresses or towels.

Nansen tells of a party of Eskimos who paddled to the head of a fiord in the spring to gather their annual supply, but found the grass too short when they arrived, so they camped and waited for it to grow. This story throws off the suggestion that the Eskimos have plenty of patience and little else to spend but time; that things grow pretty fast where the sun works on a double shift; and that this passion on their part for timothy hay amounts almost to a fever.

But to return to our Arctic oasis. It is a shel-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

tered, humid, hot, garden spot about as big as a pocket handkerchief—if you can imagine one several hundred square yards in area—and slightly over eight hundred miles from the Pole. One may stretch out on a bed of flowers, toast himself in the hot sun, brush away the flies, listen to the buzzing of the bees and chew on a piece of juicy grass, lulled into a state of coma on the gentle bosom of Mother Nature. He may do all these things, or move a half a mile in most any direction and freeze to death.

Directly behind our oasis stretched the everlasting ice of the interior, while on either hand it was surrounded by rocky bastions absolutely devoid of soil.

Under the narcotic influence of these surroundings the Doctor wandered aimlessly about. We entered into conversation.

“What are you looking for?”

“Trouble,” he replied.

“Why not blood-group some of these bees?”

“Professional etiquette. Bees must be treated by an Entomologist.” We began to climb the rounded front of the glacier; we were alone in a vast wilderness of ice.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

"A very fair example of virgin solitude?" we suggested.

"It's primeval," he answered. "Here we are in the middle of things no man has ever seen before." A pair of ravens circled above us. On top of a nearby rock lay an old and weathered caribou antler; grim symbols of far flung desolation. Just then he stumbled over something in the snow. It was a fully loaded underslung tobacco pipe that had just recently slipped out of somebody's hip pocket.

CHAPTER XI

*God gave us memory so we could have roses in December—
and skiing in August if we care for it.*

FRÈRE PENNOYER.

I

THE next morning at 3 A.M. we were off the entrance of Wolstanholm Sound. There was only one reason for pausing momentarily at this point instead of pushing on to Inglefield Gulf and walrus, and that sprang from the fact that here Rasmussen operates the most northerly trading station in the world for the benefit of the Smith Sound Eskimos. It is $76^{\circ} 30'$ North, known as Thule, and deserves the name. As a jumping off place it leaves nothing to be desired. Theoretically a ship calls every summer burdened with a modest cargo of tea, coffee, sugar, loose gunpowder, lead for bullets, tobacco, biscuits, cotton piece goods, woolen underwear, gasolene, kerosene, knives, needles, thread, hard wood and a

AN ARCTIC RODEO

dozen other luxuries and necessities, and receives in exchange the year's catch of blue fox skins, bear skins, narwhal tusks and walrus ivory. This particular summer we were functioning as that ship.

Thule lies on North Star Bay, a considerable distance up the Sound, and though it was the twenty-third of July our approach was effectively barred by a solid field of bay-ice, so the best we could do was cruise back and forth and wonder how we were going to deliver our groceries.

Finally the Skipper fell back on the technique of international diplomacy and decided that if we let the matter drop temporarily and returned next day some miracle might happen in the meantime that would solve the whole problem.

As a result we spent a morbid hour in an Eskimo graveyard with the Cabin Boy and Zoologist. The rest of the Expedition went duck shooting and the schooner was almost wrecked by an iceberg.

Saunder's Island, which was to be the subject of our researches, stands out of the sea like a mammoth layer cake. Its various yellow, orange and brown strata, accurately laid one on top of another, made one hungry by their very suggestiveness. Be-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

yond this its sheer cliffs afford unlimited opportunity for large scale maternity on the part of murres, kittiwakes and gulls. These Arctic rookeries are known as "Singing Mountains," and as far as Saundier's Island went it was vocal to a degree that was almost Wagnerian.

First, we landed on a small shelf of rocks and attempted to climb to the lowest nests, but the rocks and our enthusiasm crumbled simultaneously. Then it developed that any elevation of over three feet gave the Zoologist a giddy fit. It almost made him giddy to stand upright on the sidewalk and look down at his own feet. He could produce more vertigo from less altitude than any Zoologist we know anything about. So by mutual consent we abandoned our intimate studies of the family life of the gull for a more horizontal form of investigation.

It was when we slid off the cliff, so to speak, that we dropped into the graveyard which was conveniently located at its foot. As the prevailing note of the Arctic landscape is rock, it is impossible for the Eskimos to dig graves. The tools of the conventional sexton in these regions would consist of a

AN ARCTIC RODEO

drill and a bottle of nitro-glycerine, so the evidence of mortality is merely dressed in skins, deposited on the ground and covered with loose rocks. There it lays quiescently, concerned no more with the state of the weather, abundance or starvation. We spent the rest of the afternoon peeking through the cracks of these loose jointed mausoleums at their permanent inhabitants. In one particular case the bones were strangely distorted as though the corpse at the last moment had rather resented the idea of parting with life forever and, though the skull grinned up at us from a matted sealskin hood most affably, the eyeless sockets fixed us with a vague but questioning stare.

It was Kale, the old necromancer, who years ago had revealed to Rasmussen the Arctic version of the mystery of the Creation. "The earth fell down from above. Soil, mountains and stones fell from the sky. Thus the earth was made. Men sprang from the soil. Little children came out of the earth. They came forth between willows, covered with willow leaves. They sprawled between the dwarf bushes with closed eyes, for they could not even crawl. The soil gave them food." Woman

AN ARCTIC RODEO

now appears, clothes and makes a home for them.

“And when there were many they wanted dogs. So a man went out with a dog’s harness in his hand, stamping the ground whilst he called ‘Hok—hok—hok!’ Then the dogs poured forth from tiny mounds and they shook themselves for they were full of sand.

“Men increased. They did not know death at that time, long long ago, so they grew very old. At last they could walk no longer. They grew blind and had to lie down. They became far too many, for they did not know how to die. They over-crowded the earth. Then came a mighty flood. Many were drowned and there were fewer people. On high mountain tops where often we find mus-sels we see traces of this flood.

“Now that people were fewer two old women be-gan to talk. ‘Let us be without day,’ said one, ‘if at the same time we may be without death.’ I think this old woman was afraid of death.

“‘No,’ said the other. ‘Let us have both light and death,’ and as the old woman spoke the words it came to pass.

“Light came and joy and death.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

“When the first man died the corpse was covered with stones. But the corpse returned—it did not quite understand how to die. It put its head up from the stones, wanting to get up. But an old woman pushed it back again.

“‘We have sufficient to drag and our sledges are small,’ said she. For they were on the point of breaking camp to go hunting—so the dead man had to return to his mound of stones.

“Now when the people had light they were able to go out hunting and were no longer forced to eat from the soil. And with death came the sun, the moon and the stars.

“For when people die they rise to the sky and become radiant.”

That was the story of Kale; an inheritance from the dim past to be handed down from generation to generation by the patriarchs of the tribe. “Our tales are narrations of human experience and therefore they do not always tell of beautiful things. The words of the new-born are not to be trusted—but the experience of the ancients contain truth. The old do not carelessly waste words, therefore we are believed. Age does not lie.”

AN ARCTIC RODEO

The eyeless sockets of Kale fixed us with a vague questioning stare. "Age does not lie," they seemed to say. "During my life, as a fully qualified necromancer, I acted as middle-man between my people and the mysterious powers of nature that meddle with men. My knowledge of things hidden from ordinary mortals was drawn from suffering and privation, from the great loneliness of mountains and ice fields far away from people. No. Age does not lie. But what is truth?"

The only recognized sin is laziness, for a lazy man is a poor hunter and poor provider. So, while the righteous brethren are supplying unlimited "radiance" to the sky in the form of the aurora borealis and celestial bodies, the spirit of the lazy man, displaying no luminosity whatever, is condemned to spend his time 'til the judgment gun rolling walrus skulls to and fro.

Others of the righteous, who are not lured by the thought of becoming incandescent, journey to the depths of the sea which, since it provides all their food, is their conception of a happy hunting ground, and never again know want.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

II

While we frolicked in the catacombs the schooner lay off Dalrymple Island collecting wild fowl for the pot. The events that followed were reported by the Chief Engineer at supper and confirmed with certain reservations by the Taxidermist. "Late in the afternoon," the Chief began, "a large berg drifted past us acting very suspicious. When it was about fifty yards off it commenced to rock slowly from side to side, as though it had something on its mind—like a dog when it turns around three or four times in the same spot before it lies down—"

"No," interrupted the Taxidermist, "that doesn't describe it. You know a dog that turns around three times is going to lie down, but this berg didn't know what it was going to do. It might even be going to turn turtle."

The Chief continued, "The berg was about sixty feet high. That means there was four hundred and twenty feet of it under water. If it turned turtle and the submerged portion came up under the schooner it meant taps for the Expedition—"

"And flowers for us," added the Taxidermist.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

“Yes,” resumed the Chief, “We’d be awakened up by somebody wearing a black necktie patting us on the face with a spade.”

“Well, what did you do? Run up an alley?” we enquired.

“No,” the Chief went on. “While it rocked like a pendulum in a larger and larger arc, we got the boats lowered ready for a getaway, and then watched it decide whether it was going to be a case of bottoms up or a false alarm. For a moment that seemed like an hour it went on rocking, then split the difference like a nice iceberg and only tipped half over.”

III

When we finally returned to the entrance of North Star Bay the wind had opened the ice somewhat so we were able to work our way to within three or four miles of the station. A boatload of natives came off to us in a launch, by the simple method of following open leads where they could and where they couldn’t getting out and shoving the boat over the ice. As a method of traveling it was amphibious but effective.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Now we met Hans Neilson and Nette for the first time. Later on we were to reach terms of friendly intimacy with them, but at the moment we were unaware of how strangely our paths were about to cross and recross. Hans was Rasmussen's Danish Manager, while Nette, representing the highest type of Greenland's womanhood, was attached to the station in the capacity of practical nurse. Their excitement over our arrival was intense for a number of reasons. The preceding summer a ship had failed to arrive, so we brought them a two-year accumulation of the news from the outside world. Then, Hans had been at Thule for six years. Nette for two, and this particular summer the arrival of Rasmussen with a new Manager was to end their internment. And lastly Nette and Hans were engaged to be married. As soon as they could get back to Denmark the event was to be celebrated. So it was easy to overlook the feverish interest with which they scanned the southern horizon for the approach of a vessel. For them our arrival filled the air with the music of wedding bells. Their heads buzzed with visions; their hopes beat high. On the first sight of the schooner they had packed their

AN ARCTIC RODEO

scanty belongings. They were all ready to start.

Then a bombshell went off that blew their dreams into cosmic dust. George was obliged to inform them that Rasmussen had failed to meet us at Disco as planned and had sent no word, so we brought no relief Manager, no instructions and no hope of their leaving Thule for another year. All we could do, under the circumstances, was to deliver our merchandise and depart. They were marooned. It was a splendid example of "hope deferred that maketh the heart sick."

Yet, with a philosophy bred of long solitary years in this land of sudden, unexpected twists of fortune, they closed their ears to the sounds of the wedding bells, put away their visions and hoped for the best. George presented them with an apple apiece. It was the first Hans had tasted for six years, and as he sank his teeth into its red mid-section he seemed momentarily almost to forget the tragedy of the postponed nuptials.

But his troubles were not over, for now lashing three dories together he covered them with planking, piled them high with merchandise and started towing them to the edge of the ice. About fifty

AN ARCTIC RODEO

yards from the ship the dories sank, the planking fell to pieces and boxes, bales and bundles were strewn far and wide over the surface of the Sound.

The wreck was towed alongside, while kayakers "rode herd" on the flotsam. At length everything was retrieved, but the effect of salt water on crackers is well known. They may gain considerably in bulk from swelling, but they certainly suffer in general appearance; and the result of immersing cheap ginghams, shirting and underwear in the ocean is nothing short of frightful.

The water-soaked material was finally landed at the foot of a cliff, and soon its rocky face was covered with bumper crop of winter underdrawers drying in the sun, while badly crooked ginghams and flannel shirts added a touch of color to surroundings otherwise distinctly barren.

But even yet Neilson's troubles were not over. The imp of misfortune was certainly dogging his footsteps. In order to see how the drying underwear was progressing he stood up on top of a barrel of formaldehyde containing the liver and intestines of a sleeper shark. There must have been a flaw in the cover, for all of a sudden it let him down.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

When he finally came up he was festooned in shark intestine like a mummy. It's a relief to be able to record, however, that this act concluded the catalogue of his misfortunes.

During a lull the Doctor, Archer and Pathé News attempted to visit the Station. We joined them. It was a mistake. Pathé News insisted on shooting a few feet of film depicting the difficulties of ice and water travel. With the Archer we were to row smartly across a lead, slide the boat over the ice to the next one, and repeat.

Pathé yelled "camera"; we rowed across the lead all right but forgot to stop, ran into the ice and both went over backwards. Then, in skidding the boat over the ice, we crossed a large opening that the Archer, who was leading, forgot to mention, so we went down it up to our neck.

"What the Hell kind of acting is that?" yelled Pathé, and just then the thin shelf of ice he was standing on gave way. When he came up we pulled him out.

The Archer was becoming slightly peeved. He had faced the Kleig lights of Hollywood and knew his stuff.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

"Are you fellows goofy or what?" he remarked sarcastically. We slipped the boat into the next lead and as it shot away from the ice he made a flying leap for it, missing it clean.

The three of us now paused to wring ourselves out. "Take my advice," said the Doctor, who had been standing in a safe place enjoying himself, "get back to the ship as fast as you can and change your clothes before you get a chill. I'll get an Eskimo to take me in." Then his feet began to slip, and making one carom he executed a perfect swan dive into the middle of a small lake.

"Well, maybe we'd all better go home," said Pathé, folding up his camera.

We were glad to pull out of Thule. There was something depressing about the place, and this feeling was only intensified as we watched Hans and Nette slowly fade away in the distance.

CHAPTER XII

Claret is the liquor for boys; port for men; but he who aspires to be a hero must drink brandy.

DOCTOR JOHNSON.

I

THE next thing we did of any importance was to get shipwrecked.

It was not a vulgar, flashy wreck. On the contrary, it was entirely subdued and modest, and satisfied all the requirements of good breeding. It was probably the dullest wreck that ever took place. Nevertheless, it cured us of all desire for any more of this form of entertainment. In the future anyone who suggests going out and getting wrecked can do it alone. We wouldn't walk across the street to take part in the "Wreck of the *Hesperus*."

On leaving Thule we proceeded to Inglefield Gulf for the purpose of picking up some Eskimo

AN ARCTIC RODEO

hunters and bagging a few walrus, but again found ourselves cut off from the villages by the ice pack. Most of the day was spent lying off from the eastern tip of Herbert Island waiting for something to happen. Some of us landed and climbed a thousand feet of loose rock for a view of the Gulf. The first thing that greeted us as we stepped ashore was half a dozen vagrant skulls rolling about. Bears had wrecked the graves to which they originally belonged, and played jack-straws with the contents. An open grave surrounded by a mixed assortment of ulnas, radii, femurs, clavicles, floating ribs and the plural of coccyx, not to mention craniums, is apt to suggest that for the moment the omens are not what might be termed propitious. However, the view from the top of the island was comprehensive and worth the effort.

Inglefield Gulf, which is fifty-five miles wide at the mouth and eighty deep, presents every phase of Arctic scenery, climate and life. In fact, "It is a little Arctic world in itself," says an Arctic authority. "Along its shores are to be found low grassy slopes; towering cliffs, massive and solid, carved by the titan agencies of the savage North into wild

AN ARCTIC RODEO

form; wind-swept points where nothing can exist; sheltered nooks where never a violent breath of air penetrates; valleys where luxuriant grass is brightened by myriads of yellow, purple, blue and white flowers; slopes and plateaus as barren as a cinder pile; huge glaciers which launch a prolific progeny of bergs into the sea; tiny glaciers which cling tenaciously to the angles of the cliffs; miles and miles of glistening, blue, berg-dotted water and a few miles back from the shore the silent, eternal, frozen sea of the Great Ice."

Beside all this there was some nice scenery.

After feasting our eyes on glaciers and icebergs of every conceivable shape, we wormed our way through the floes and headed around the north side of Herbert Island. As we passed between Herbert and Northumberland Islands seventeen walrus formed in a ring, their bodies half out of water, and barked at each other. They seemed to be holding a caucus. Their voices were as hoarse as though they'd been drinking and their eyes were bloodshot. Seals popped up all about us. Thousands of birds fed on the surface of the glassy water. The sunlight was mellow.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

It was late. We had just joined the Cowboy in a sandwich, consisting of half-cooked seal meat and sliced raw onion, with the result that when we retired we found ourself in the condition where "the chrysalis of faint misgiving becomes so readily the butterfly of panic." We lay in our bunk and imagined molehills into mountains.

Then we got up and went on deck. A few minutes later we hit the reef of lava. There was just a series of nasty bumps as our keel locked itself into the jagged spikes of a volcanic picket fence. That was all. There were no crashing spars, wild screams, frenzied humanity fighting for life or any of the natural concomitants of shipwrecks. Nevertheless, we were fastened to that reef with an irrevocable permanency. We had become an integral part of the local geology.

George was asleep. As we shook him, such was our ignorance, the whole affair seemed exceedingly ludicrous.

"What's the matter?" he said sleepily.

"The funniest thing has just happened."

"Yes?"

"We've just climbed up on top of a lot of rocks."

AN ARCTIC RODEO

In two minutes everyone was on deck. The next thirty-six hours were sheer unromantic chaos, full of nothing but insomnia and grueling labor.

The tide was at flood when the schooner struck, so immediately three anchors were run out and all hands called to the levers of the capstan. Then the engine was set at full sped ahead and a titanic effort made to pull her off. We might just as well have attempted to move Pike's Peak.

Now the tide began to go out and the Skipper talked to God. It was very annoying. In twelve hours another tide would rise and float us off, however, so why worry! We would just have to wait. During the intermission we went ashore to stretch our legs. There was a rocky beach, a narrow patch of greensward from which rose a high and very nude mountain and the ruins of three sod igloos. That was all.

The schooner was nicely balanced on a knife edge of lava at a point just abaft her mainmast. So, as the tide receded, her bow gradually submerged itself in deep water while her stern climbed up in the air until it looked like the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Finally, as though she was thoroughly

AN ARCTIC RODEO

bored with the whole business, she rolled over on her side until her deck was just a few degrees less than vertical. This precipitated an avalanche of miscellaneous cargo and personal effects that wouldn't have been nice to be buried under. Then she began to fill with Arctic sea water, strongly impregnated with black, fetid, oily bilge. In this pleasant mixture most of our books, clothes, instruments, cutlery and crockery were soon swallowed up.

Of course she couldn't go to the bottom. She was luted too securely to the rocks. But any ordinarily playful summer breeze was all that was needed to saw her in two in the middle. Her false keel had vanished already, while the planking on her port side was gnawed to shreds.

One of the saddest sights in the world is a ship in distress, especially a sailing ship where slack shrouds and tangled ropes add a mournful touch to the general appearance of desolation. The *Effie M. Morrissey* was no exception. She looked completely abandoned, the frowzy, tousled, inebriated wreck of a lost soul. If she had possessed the gift of vocal expression her wails of anguish would have

AN ARCTIC RODEO

filled Inglefield Gulf with mournful echoes. But she suffered in silence.

Hard-boiled sea captains, who would think nothing of seeing a sailor fall from the crosstrees or decapitated by a running rope, are generally softened to the point of sheer sentimentality by the loss of their ships. Some go down with them, others burst into wild fits of weeping, all are the last to leave.

When the Skipper lost the *Karluk* in the ice near Wrangel Island he first got the crew safely off, then returned to stand by the ship during her death agony. Taking the phonograph he went into the galley and soothed her last moments with music, both sacred and profane. As he finished each record he threw it in the stove. It would not be needed again. There were about one hundred and fifty of them. He saved Chopin's *Funeral March* for the end, and to the accompaniment of its solemn strains the vessel made her final plunge. When her sail was level with the ice he stepped off, raised his hat, said: "Good-bye, *Karluk*," and then proceeded to take steps for the safety of the survivors.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Our wreck wasn't nearly as sentimental, however. It seemed to revolve entirely around manual labor. The first twelve hours were spent lashing empty fuel oil casks under the schooner's stern and lugging her stone ballast and movable deck cargo to the forecastle, with the object of depressing her bow and lifting her keel out of the vise on the next flood tide.

Then we went ashore for a mug up. There was no solid food, as it was impossible to reach the stores while she was standing on her head.

There was no danger, which reduced the whole affair to dullness. If she broke up, all we had to do was row south along the coast to Upernivik, a little regatta of some five hundred miles. From there we could catch a boat to Denmark in the autumn.

The new tide rose higher. Gradually the deck became level. Old Tom Gushue leaned over the rail with a long pole, notched to show the level of the water when we went aground. The tide was in! For thirty minutes we strained on the anchors. The Diesel engine sounded as though it was about to blow up. Then Tom straightened up. "You

AN ARCTIC RODEO

might as well give over," he said. "This tide's two feet lower than the last." We were stuck harder than ever.

Now we "abandoned ship." Every movable object was passed over the side and rafted ashore. We emerged from this experience with our mind definitely made up that we would rather become a public charge than earn our living as a stevedore.

As we were transferring the supplies the Skipper stood over a pile of boxes. "Look alive, here you fellows," he bawled. "Get this Marconi outfit ashore and be so-and-so quick about it. The such-and-such contraption may save us a this-and-that long row, so be high-tiddle-te-i-ti careful of it."

We looked at the boxes with a new interest. The labels on them read: "Superior Quality Macaroni." They were promptly landed on the beach with the veneration to which they were entitled.

When the schooner was cleared of everything that even faintly resembled food, we joined George and the Skipper in the after-cabin for the purpose of removing the ship's papers, compass, quadrant and other items of interest that might turn up. The tide was out and the floor tilted at such an

AN ARCTIC RODEO

angle we stood with our feet on the port lockers and leaned our backs against it. Now we discovered that the Skipper's trousers had "gone west." He had caught them on a nail and ripped them from "keel to main truck," as he expressed it. After considerable acrobatic climbing George dug out a pair of white flannels. They were passed to the Skipper. He got them half on before giving up. "What do you think I am—a blooming eel?" he exploded. "I've got a posterior like a rhinoceros. It's no secret. Won't someone hand me a pair of trousers with some slack in 'em?"

We reached him a pair of ours. "That's more like it," he exclaimed with a sigh of relief, as he slipped them on. "There's plenty of play in these."

We were temperately flattered.

II

The supplies, as they arrived on the beach, were stacked to form the walls of a refuge hut, the roof of which consisted of a spare sail. It was a strange, but roomy, sort of tabernacle. In preparing a meal all that it was necessary for Billy the Cook to do

AN ARCTIC RODEO

was reach up and pull the proper ingredients down from the walls. Its fane was constructed from sacks of onions, its nave from hams and flitches of bacon, while the architecture of the basilica leaned strongly toward early canned tomatoes influenced slightly by spaghetti. There was room for all of us and to spare.

Now that we were snugly located on a pile of rocks about seven hundred miles from the Pole, with every prospect that before long it would be a case of every man for himself, one almost unconsciously began to look his companions over with an appraising eye. What would they do when the veneer of civilization was knocked off and all that remained were the savage, primitive instincts of self-preservation? There was no doubt about the answer as far as the members of the Expedition went. They were all thoroughbreds and would take what fate betided without a complaint. With one exception the same might be said of the crew. This man, whom we will call "Jim," was six feet three, and as hard as nails mentally and physically. Though an excellent seaman he was by nature thoroughly cold and cruel, and at this stage in the

AN ARCTIC RODEO

proceedings we promised ourself to be careful to cling to someone else should the need arise. As we thought the matter over, the selection of the Doctor as our first choice of a companion, if the worst came to the worst, was inevitable. He was plump; radiated a lot of heat; would float easily or cut up into juicy sirloins should we fall on lean days. One would be able to live off him for a month.

Our interest in the whole affair began to wane slightly. There was entirely too much of it. At the moment a few hours' sleep seemed much more important than anything else. We could also have done with a dish of ham and eggs.

However, that isn't the way wrecks are managed apparently. So midnight found us all back on the schooner preparing for a final effort. This time the jib, jumbo and foresail were raised to encourage the Deisel engine. We manned the windlass. Old Tom with his measuring stick hung over the side. "Give her everything you've got," yelled the Skipper. We strained and struggled, the air became blue with vivid language. The paid hands cursed with the fluency of professionals. With the diffidence natural to amateurs we followed them as best

AN ARCTIC RODEO

we could. Perspiration dripped from us. It was no use.

Now the Skipper briefly gave his views on theology, geology, zoology, and the schooner, with special reference to the Polar regions. "All right," he concluded, "if this is where she wants to stay we'll pull the sticks out of her and make a permanent job of it. Raise the mainsail."

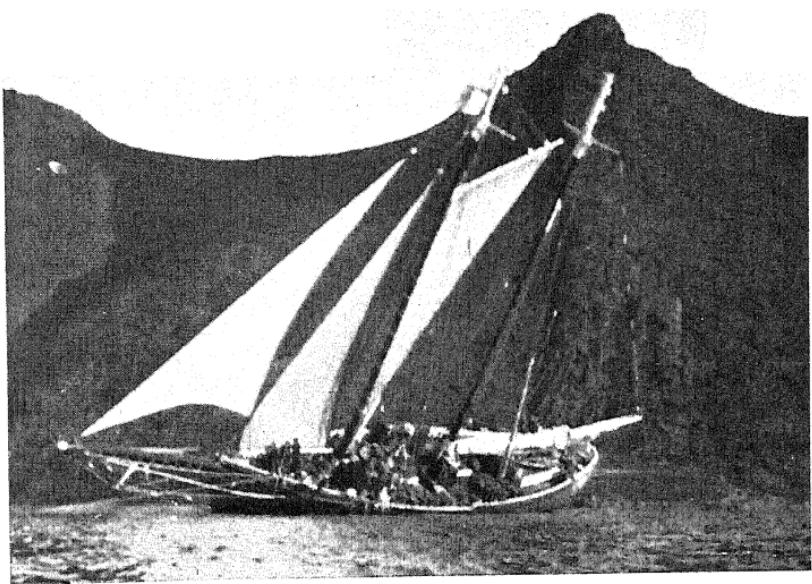
It was done, just in time to catch the full effect of a squall. The sea rose. The schooner heeled over until her scuppers were under water. The Skipper yelled like a madman. She quivered—bumped twice—hesitated and slipped off the reef into deep water.

Nobody seemed to care much. For a few minutes we stood around and looked at each other. Then the schooner suddenly brought up at the end of the anchor chain and jibed. That reminded us to heave the anchor. All the stone ballast was piled on her forecastle, so she rode with her stern high out of water like a Spanish galleon. The Skipper, who had been without sleep for forty-eight hours, drowsed with his hand on the wheel. Our course became serpentine. George, the Cabin Boy and

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Cowboy dropped into the launch and made for the refuge hut ashore. Nobody even waved good-bye to them. Yet that was the last we saw of them for three days. We crawled around Northumberland Island. "There are still two anchors out," someone remarked looking over the side. "That'll save us lowering them when we arrive where we're going," was the answer. Once we looked back at the Skipper. He was alone at the wheel, talking to himself with a great earnestness. Suddenly he burst into laughter—uncontrollable, side-splitting laughter. Evidently he had just recalled some rather grim pleasantry. Someone came up from below. "She's leaking like a funnel," he said, then stretched out on the roof of the after-cabin and went to sleep.

At length we came to rest in a shallow bay on the north side of the island about twelve miles from the refuge hut. Billy the Cook, broth of a boy that he was, resuscitated the fire in the galley stove and actually produced ham and eggs from emergency stores that had been left on board. As we ate the water rose over the floor of the main cabin.



"THE TIDE BEGAN TO FALL AND THE SKIPPER TALKED TO GOD."



"ONE OF THE SADDEST SIGHTS IN THE WORLD IS A SHIP IN DISTRESS."



PEARY MEN. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT TOOKASHUE, KSINGWAH,
KUDLUKTU AND POODLUNA.



BILLY THE COOK MAKING BULK DELIVERIES AT A GALLEY PARTY

AN ARCTIC RODEO

This suggested action. "You'd better divide into shifts and go to it," announced the Skipper, and now for the first time a bilge pump entered our lives.

III

Abaft the mainmast there were two of these instruments of torture on the schooner. Columbus probably had a pair just like them on the *Santa Maria*. They were direct descendants of the type used by Ulysses on his *Odyssey*. In fact, Noah was probably familiar with the original model. As bilge pumps they were marvelous air suckers. A four-hour trick on the levers of our particular samples was a hydraulic picnic absolutely devoid of inspiration. It produced cerebral petrifaction. With dizzy rapidity one's intelligence quotient dropped to zero. In the fact that the hypnotic rhythm was a positive cure for insomnia lay their sole virtue.

We only had to take care of about fifteen gallons a minute, so one man easily kept the water under control. Yet even that insignificant trickle amounted to nine hundred gallons an hour, or twenty-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

one thousand six hundred a day, so for the ten days we devoted to the matter, 216,000 gallons of the best that Baffin Bay could produce were pumped through the porous bottom of the schooner.

Each man developed a system of his own—either pumping furiously fifteen minutes and resting thirty, or applying a slow but continuous suction. Both systems had its defenders. But the most practical method was to dry her up, then wait in the galley till the water rose so high somebody in the main cabin got his feet wet and began to complain.

The next two days we spent vacillating between sleep, moving the rock ballast back where it belonged and tidying up in general. By comparison with those just past, they were restful, delightful days, filled with languorous inactivity.

The Skipper lay in his bunk a long time the first morning listening to somebody rearranging the oil casks over his head. "It's a queer thing," he remarked, at length, to the deck above him, "in the Arctic there's odorless flowers and down home there's what you might call lawless laws. I wish to glory there was such a thing as a noiseless noise. I'd like to get a bit of sleep."

AN ARCTIC RODEO

A boatload of Eskimos suddenly appeared from nowhere. It contained an old Peary man named Poodluna and his family of husky young men and women. They came aboard and promptly went to sleep in a small bin in the engine room, eight of them in damp skin clothing using each other as pillows. When not engaged in gastronomic excesses their waking moments were employed in useful labor about the schooner.

The second day the food ran out with a bang. This stirred us to action, so we hove anchor and started back to the supplies. But no sooner did we leave our shelter than a strong south wind drove us back again and there we lay for another day. In some mysterious manner Billy the Cook produced sardines out of the air. They were kippered for breakfast, grilled for lunch and served for supper in their natural state.

At length, toward the end of the third day, a couple of dark specks appeared against the white background of a glacier. They grew larger, took on definite form until finally the glasses revealed the Cowboy and George plodding down the mountainside to the beach.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

"Where's the Cabin Boy?" someone asked George as he climbed aboard.

"Left him in the hut," he replied. "Slightly delirious with a temperature of 105°. Looks like a touch of bronchitis. You fellows disappeared without leaving any address. For all we knew you might have gone off some place and foundered, so we decided to find out."

The thought of the Cabin Boy lying alone in that desolate spot, waking the echoes with his delirious babble, was not pleasant. He seemed a long way from home. We hove anchor at once, and in spite of a boisterous wind two hours later dropped the hook off the refuge hut. Then it was only a matter of minutes before the Doctor had him in bed.

The night was spent reloading the supplies. At 4 A.M. we were ready to head south for Upernivik. Poodluna and family were the recipients of unexpected wealth in the form of strips of iron and bundles of hickory cut to the proper lengths for fashioning into sledges. It was a present from Harry Whitney, who years before had spent a winter with the Poodlunas on Inglefield Gulf and

AN ARCTIC RODEO

ever since, when the opportunity offered, had never failed to remember them. The fact that, of all the Smith Sound Eskimos, chance delivered the Poodluna family into our hands was not only strange but the cause of their sudden conversion into *nouveaux riches*.

The Cabin Boy slept. Silence, slightly tinged with defeat, settled over the schooner. We turned our backs on the North.

PART II

“On with the dance”

CHAPTER XIII

The Eskimos have the singular custom of ratifying a bargain by licking the article all over before it is put away in security. We frequently shuddered at seeing the children draw a razor over their tongues as unconcernedly as if it had been an ivory paper knife.

FROBISHER.

I

“**T**HERE’S certainly no telling where a man’s going to end up next in this world,” remarked Billy the Cook, shaking his head. “The Skipper would keep on traveling till he woke up dead and even then he wouldn’t stop for a friendly glass at his own wake.”

Two weeks had passed. Much had happened.

It was 5 A.M. of a beautiful still morning. We stood gazing at a rocky beach, fringed with a narrow patch of greensward, from which rose a high and very nude mountain. It all looked strangely familiar. There was every reason it should. The physical details of the spot where one has almost

AN ARCTIC RODEO

been shipwrecked are not apt to fade from the memory and that was the exact spot on Northumberland Island we were looking at. Nothing had changed.

It almost seemed as though we'd never been south to Upernivik at all. Maybe it was a dream. But it couldn't have been. We certainly pumped the whole of Melville Bay through the schooner. That was no dream. And Rasmussen found us at Upernivik, for there he stood leaning against the skylight. Of course it was no dream. The Lady Doctor smoked the cigars; they dedicated the church; the Bishop of Greenland ate the raw seal meat; the diver from the Danish Patrol Boat caulked up the holes in the schooner and came up out of the ice water with hands as blue as a decomposed lobster salad—

“Breakfast!” somebody yelled at this point and interrupted our train of thought.

Yet the events of the past fortnight had been chaotic enough to more or less justify our state of mind.

Two weeks previously we had folded our tents, waved farewell to the Poodlunas and headed for

AN ARCTIC RODEO

home, a sadder but wiser group of Explorers. The following day the pet wisdom tooth of Ralph the Sailor blew up. So, after the supper things had been cleared away, he was laid on the dining room table, given a complete anaesthetic by means of a sponge and some chloroform, and operated on with a sterilized cold chisel and machinist's hammer. The Archer, who functioned as anaesthetist, got all hot and worried besides collecting a beautiful chloroform jag. All through the operation he alternately sang *Mother Machree* and *I'm Sitting on Top of the World*. The operation was a great success. Sailor Ralph's first words on regaining consciousness were, "I've been kicked by a mule." This was one of the most astute remarks he made during the whole trip. For two days he looked as though he had been in a subway explosion. Then the crisis passed and his molars clicked with all their pristine vigor.

Personally, our worst day was the result of being called at a quarter past twelve midnight, instead of a quarter past twelve noon, for our trick at the pump. Owing to the bright sunshine we did not detect the error until too late. It took us three

AN ARCTIC RODEO

days to really find out what time it was. In the meantime our heart was filled with bitterness.

One night the Radio Operator got in touch with the Canadian Patrol Boat, *Boethic*, which was standing by over near Jones Sound. They had received word that not only had we been wrecked but all our supplies had been lost. They sent their sympathy. Someone suggested responding with our menu for the day. It consisted of: breakfast—oatmeal, bacon and eggs, coffee; lunch—vegetable soup, mashed potatoes, salt horse, blueberry pie, bread and butter, and coffee; supper—Norwegian cheese, baked macaroni, pancakes with jelly, tea, bread and butter. The only dietetic hardship was the Norwegian cheese. It tasted of mice.

II

The next night we drifted from midnight until five A.M. with the engine shut off so the story of the wreck could be broadcasted to the papers. While this was being done 5493 gallons of water were pumped through the schooner and the only wreck worth talking about was the man who did the pumping. But when one is sensitive to "news

AN ARCTIC RODEO

value" and intimately connected with the profession, anything may be expected. George would have stopped in the middle of a rotten plank over a chasm a hundred feet deep to broadcast his reactions to a waiting world.

We came on deck the morning of the fourth day to find the horizon split with jagged peaks. For several hours we played checkers with icebergs and the round domelike rocks. It was then we learned that as a result of the wreck the compass had developed delirium tremens and the Skipper had been setting his course by intuition. We had been out of sight of land for three days in the middle of Melville Bay, yet such was the "full body and high proof" of his intuition that at noon we dropped anchor off Upernivik as though we were returning from a pleasure jaunt rather than a four hundred and fifty mile tour of the Sailor's Graveyard.

At this point George and the Skipper were occupied by the single problem of beaching the schooner, stuffing her wounds with oakum and staggering home as rapidly as possible. The trip was over. It was a sound idea, but it now developed there wasn't a beach in the whole of North

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Greenland. The landscape just took a running jump straight into the ocean. For a while it seemed as though we'd have to find some nice quiet nook and stand the vessel up on her hind legs. Then the Governor suddenly became inspired, and informed us he knew just the place we were looking for. For eleven miles he piloted us through a narrow fiord toward the interior. Sheer walls of rock two thousand feet high shut out the sun. We seemed to be heading straight for the Plutonic regions. But at length, turning an abrupt corner, we entered a small open bay, and there sure enough was a miniature shelving beach of small rounded stones. For the next six days we called this place "home."

However, the neighborhood offered several sporting possibilities, so it was not entirely without merit. Ptarmigan whistled on the mossy slopes of the mountains, while several bird rookeries within easy reach furnished continuous flights of murre, razor-billed auks and kittiwakes. As for eider ducks, they were always either going or coming from some remote destination with the speed of aeroplanes.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Late one afternoon, with the *Archer* and *Pathé*, we borrowed the launch and went murre shooting. To perform the functions of a retriever an Eskimo accompanied us. Some distance down the fiord we made ourselves comfortable on a point of rock. A continuous procession of murre and razor-billed auks flew down the fiord from their rookeries to their feeding grounds at its mouth. For twenty-four hours a day countless thousands of birds passed back and forth over our narrow neck of land. They went empty, but returned with a freightage of young sculpin or caplin in their bills. The fish were carried in precisely the same manner by each bird; the head halfway down the throat; the tail flopping in the breeze; never crosswise in the beak or tail down and head out. It was one of the most striking cases of uniform procedure imaginable. Evidently it was either unconstitutional to carry a fish in any other manner, or a gross breach of etiquette. At any rate, none of them tried it.

When a bird was hit, regardless of whether or not it was brought down, it invariably dropped its fish—it could hardly be blamed—and before the fish had fallen ten feet a diving gull had snatched

AN ARCTIC RODEO

it out of the air, on the wing. Before long so many gulls had become interested in this aerial form of feeding they interfered with the shooting.

At length the primus stove was started, and the meeting was called to order. An hour later Pathé, whose French ancestry revealed itself in his sympathetic attitude to the culinary art, uttered a sigh and relaxed on a bed of reindeer moss. "As a matter of record I move that, fried very rare in butter, and eaten with bread and raw onions, pepper and salt, the breast of the razor-billed auk beggars description," he said. The motion was carried, and there being no unfinished business we adjourned. It was midnight. The sun played full on the rock-ribbed peaks that surrounded us. In turn, they cast long shadows over the glassy waters of the fiords, painting them deep violet. To the north the incandescent whiteness of a field of bergs dazzled the eye with its brilliancy.

All efforts to repair the schooner proved futile. She was dragged up on the beach as far as bad language and a couple of ropes would take her, but the best we could do was to work her into a position where at low tide she heeled over in about four feet

AN ARCTIC RODEO

of water, which entirely removed all chance of reaching the worst lacerations with a caulking tool. Her leaks began to look like permanent institutions. While all this was taking place, we camped on shore and communed with nature.

III

Then one evening two launches crowded with people rounded the point. This was more traffic than we had seen since leaving the East River, so it all seemed very impressive. There were sailors in uniform and officers in gold braid, while on top of the cabin of what appeared to be the flagship of the squadron stood a short man in riding boots.

“He’s forgotten something,” said the Taxidermist as we watched them approach.

“What?” asked the Doctor.

“His horse,” answered the Cowboy. But the matter was never clearly decided, for at that moment the launch drew alongside and with great agility the short man clambered to our sloping deck.

“My name is Rasmussen,” he said, “and this is

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Captain West of the Danish Patrol Boat, *Iceland Falk*. The Danish Government has heard of your difficulty and instructed the Captain to proceed north until he found you and offer every assistance within his power. My steamer was late in reaching South Greenland so, though I missed you at Disco Island, I was fortunate enough to catch the patrol boat." Then we all bowed from the waist. Our troubles were over!

The next morning about twenty sailors appeared with a couple of pontoons and a complete diving outfit. In this the Chief Petty Officer was armed cap-a-pie and let down into the icy water of the fiord. For two days he tapped away on the bottom of the schooner and then pronounced her cured. Though he dressed for the occasion, in heavy woolen stockings and wore mittens, at the end of every hour he was dragged to the surface in a state of blue frigidity. Then he was taken into the galley and thawed out with schnapps. When he became pliable enough to bend easily he was let down for another spell. The bottle of schnapps and repairs were finished simultaneously.

While this kaleidoscopic series of events was

AN ARCTIC RODEO

transpiring a social hurricane was raging at Upernivik. A new church was dedicated, the Bishop of all Greenland officiated at a wedding, there was a banquet at the Governor's and a dancing marathon on the *Iceland Falk*. For three days and nights nobody closed an eye. They were afraid they'd miss something, and in this respect they showed themselves citizens of rare discernment.

The dedication was preceded by a procession which formed in front of the Governor's mansion and wended its way, by devious rocky paths, to the entrance of the church. It was headed by the Bishop of all Greenland—a "priest of blameless conversation who had pleasure in the law"—in full regalia. The Officers of the *Iceland Falk*, in dress uniforms, followed, duly escorted by the Governor in a high silk hat and frock coat. They, in turn, were trailed by minor officials not quite so lavishly attired, while pressing on their heels came the leading citizens in vestments distinctly neat but plain. At this point the sartorial quality of the procession dwindled rapidly, the less important following the more important, until its tail end was composed of human bed rock, so to speak, clothed in skins of

AN ARCTIC RODEO

dubious ancestry grown mouldy for lack of a beating. It was a lovely example of the law of diminishing returns.

When the church was entered the men sat on one side, the women on the other, like Quakers. Following the service there was a wedding, in which the congregation seemed far more interested than the bride or groom; in fact, directly after the ceremony, the groom turned his back on the bride and hurried away for a week's hunting in the fiords. There was nothing uxorious about him.

The Governor's banquet was a smashing success. There were hors d'œvres and schnapps and a barrage of toasts. Rasmussen was called on but failed to respond. He had mysteriously disappeared. After a brief search he was discovered in an igloo with the Bishop of all Greenland eating raw seal meat.

One of the most outstanding personalities in the whole community was the resident physician; a huge, blonde, blue-eyed woman. Her teeth were white, her expression alert and her taste for strong cigars highly developed. On first being introduced we offered her a cigarette. She refused politely, on

AN ARCTIC RODEO

the grounds that she didn't smoke cigarettes, there was not enough punch to them, but suggested with considerable delicacy that if we could spare a cigar it would be appreciated. Before leaving New York we had purchased, under the guidance of one who was a connoisseur in such matters, a few boxes of very potent stogies. "You're sure these are strong?" we asked our friend. "We're going up where men are men."

"They're compounded of dog's hair, camel's wool and thunder," he answered decisively. "With one of those cigars you could torpedo the *Leviathan*."

With a murmured apology we tendered one of these cylinders of death to the Lady Doctor. Then sat around and waited for the explosion. When about half through, she removed it suddenly and waved it toward the Zenith. "Now it's coming," we thought, and prepared to catch her as she swooned. She threw back her head, blew out a dense fog of pungent smoke and remarked in a dreamy voice: "This is the first real smoke I've had for a month."

We made her a present of the box and spent the

AN ARCTIC RODEO

rest of the afternoon watching her light one from another.

She was an Amazon, a Valkyrie, a Super-woman; the kind of a woman that offers a wonderful framework on which to build myths. It was said that the previous winter on a single journey she had worn out five teams of dogs and reduced the drivers to shattered wrecks. Again it was reported that the Captain and Mate of a Dundee schooner had attempted to drink Scotch whiskey with her in a competitive way. When they disappeared under the table, she tucked one under each arm, carried them to the harbor, rowed them off to their vessel and threw them into their bunks. Myths, no doubt, but she certainly possessed resiliency.

At length, we were declared seaworthy. All that remained was to decide what to do next. Rasmussen came aboard bag and baggage and with George and the Skipper went into executive session. Then orders were given to heave anchor. "Where are we going?" we asked George.

"Back where we came from," he answered.

The Danish Navy wished us "good weather." The sun lay red on the horizon, tinging cliff and

AN ARCTIC RODEO

berg a sanguinary red, which faded away towards the zenith to a delicate apple blossom pink.

The Governor's cannon barked three times, a gun on the *Iceland Falk* followed, awaking terrific reverberations, and so, with dipping flags and waving hats, Upernivik faded into the distance for the last time.

CHAPTER XIV

The crew took the old Eskimo woman for a witch and had her buskins pulled off to see if she was cloven-footed.

FROBISHER.

I

THREE days later at 1 A.M. we cast anchor in North Star Bay just off Rasmussen's trading station. Not a living thing was to be seen. There was plenty of silence and an abundance of desolation, but otherwise the place was as void of life as a rifled Egyptian tomb. Evidently Neilson, Nette and the rest of the citizens, expecting no more vessels, had settled down for the long winter night.

After pumping our fog horn for half an hour, Neilson's launch appeared around the ramp of Table Mountain. It was loaded to the water's edge with a cargo of skin-clad humanity returning from some kind of local business trip. They drew nearer; they gazed at us in blank amazement, incredulous;

AN ARCTIC RODEO

they seemed fearful that we were some kind of hallucination; a phantasy born of the rocky solitude. Fifty yards from the schooner they saw Rasmussen standing on the rail. He was waving his hat. They looked, unable to grasp the fact that their benefactor actually stood there in the flesh. They began to murmur his name. Their voices grew loud with excitement. The silence was fractured by volleys of clicking phrases. They broke into wild cheers, jumping up and down in the launch: "Knud! Knud!" they yelled. "Hi, Knud!"

In the excitement Neilson failed to shut off the motor of the launch. He was too busy yelling: "Hi, Knud!" And now its cutwater rammed us in the midriff with a blow that wrenched a groan from our oak planks, while every man, woman and child in it went flat. "Don't bother to knock, come right in," said George and it was thus the *Effie M. Morrissey* brought the good news from Upernivik to Thule.

It was 2 A.M. "Seals were blowing at the snout of the glacier," a native confided. This seemed more or less like a challenge, so George and several of us went seal hunting.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

With a couple of native hunters we proceeded around Table Mountain, pausing for a moment near the tent village at its foot to pick up a couple of kayaks. As we sat idly waiting in our launch something huddled in the rocks of the hillside attracted our eye. It was an ancient Eskimo. He lay in a circular shelter of stones, shallow and roofless. A hairless skin covered him. At intervals he coughed violently and spat blood. Rheumatism had crippled him to the point where movement was almost impossible. Surrounding him was a ring of bones—picked clean. Nearby skulked a dog waiting for a chance to dart in and do a little scavenging.

The face of this man was a skull in which burned a pair of living eyes. They looked up at one with an expression of mingled humiliation and wonderment. "What is this all about?" they seemed to query. "Yesterday I was strong—a mighty hunter—and today—what has happened?" Obviously, he was just a little more than sick. Death lurked in the offing. The horizons were closing in on him.

The relatives appeared to have decided that the open air was a better place to rehearse a death rat-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

tle than the fetid atmosphere of a tupik—the acoustics were better. “Besides the tupiks were crowded,” one could almost hear them complain. “Ahngmalokto is done for.” And so Ahngmalokto was carried out to his rock pile. At intervals a raw bird or two, in various stages of fatigue, was thrown him. His blood grew colder and colder; the ring of gnawed bones surrounding him grew wider and deeper.

We left him behind us. Far up the fiord to the very ice-wall of the glacier we forced our way through a rubble of ice. Occasionally a seal popped half its body from the water to regard us with a myopic stare. There were quite a few seals. In fact, we were intruding on one of their favorite feeding grounds, for where the glaciers slip into the sea and plow up the primeval ooze of the ocean bed marine life flourishes. Such a neighborhood is regarded by a seal as nothing short of a watery Garden of Eden.

In spite of this, however, we never fired a gun. It was too cold. The bitterness was so absolute we couldn’t even shiver. At the end of an hour we returned to the ship, sealless and senseless, and

AN ARCTIC RODEO

done as much as any living man to place the Stars and Stripes at the Pole." The Skipper began to warm up to his theme—"And this is his reward—his thanks. Left to die like an old wornout sledge dog. There's no beating of drums for him, and even if there was he wouldn't know what it was all about. But just the same it's a shame—it's a crime, sir, that's what it is."

Then for an hour they talked of the old days; when they were both young and the sap ran strong in their veins; when Peary was alive and there was plenty of food and adventure. Both men relaxed. Once or twice Ahngmalokto laughed between spasm of coughing. Their eyes were filled with a strange excitement. They were living backwards.

Showing extraordinary versatility, the weather had become balmy again. For an hour Ahngmalokto luxuriated in the warm sunshine. The sky was cloudless; the sea, without a ripple, shimmered like quicksilver. Then off Cape Abernathy our engine stopped, for where a great glacier crawled down between the hills there was a patch of vivid green against the shoreline, a verdant hand's-breadth watered by icy streams. It was the summer

AN ARCTIC RODEO

home of Ahngmalokto. The whaleboat was drawn alongside and the patriarchal family bundled into it. With a roar our engine started. The strip of glassy water widened between us and Ahngmalokto faded out of the picture.

Static now appeared on deck. He had just been talking to the *New York Times* and was full of the latest news. Two channel swimmers had been forced to quit owing to bad weather, and sharks. A terrific electrical storm had broken the heat wave in New York. The persistent murdering of New York policemen was stirring officials to action. "Life terms for shooting policemen," was the cry.

We were seven hundred miles from the Pole, yet down below life seemed to be moving along about as usual.

II

The night passed.

We were off Keate on Northumberland Island looking for hunters. The walrus grounds were near at hand, but without the kayaks, harpoons and seal-skin floats of the natives, hunting them would be

AN ARCTIC RODEO

next to impossible as they sink to the bottom the moment they are mortally wounded. Poodluna's igloo was the focal point of this small Arctic resort. In fact, the immediate family of Poodluna, a handful of dogs and their concomitant population of fleas constituted its entire census. The scene of our wreck was not over a mile away.

Meanwhile Rasmussen and Neilson rowed ashore, only to find the town in the hands of the women. All the men were away hunting—they had been gone two days already. Strange, uncertain lives these women lead, with their men throwing a slab of dried walrus meat into a kayak and vanishing to return in a couple of days, or never, according to circumstances. Every time a husband sets out on a hunting trip he leaves behind him a potential widow. The women merely wait. Then when the food runs out they paddle to the next community and live on the generosity of the neighbors. A period of reasonable doubt follows and they begin to scan the horizon for fresh matrimonial material. The ultimate return of the former husband occasions no melodramatic scene. No particular harm has been done. In fact, he

AN ARCTIC RODEO

may have been relieved of a tartar; in which case he can either try a new wife or enjoy the care-free life of bachelorhood.

When our envoys returned we proceeded between Northumberland and Herbert Islands bound for another village named Karna. Then the fog rolled down on us in thick unctuous billows. We hove to, drifting idly on currents that seemed to have great difficulty in determining exactly where it was they were heading for.

About the middle of the morning we nearly collided with a dead narwhal—a prize that caused the Zoologist's mouth to water. It was a very dead narwhal. The discovery was followed by a brisk debate. Should it be towed ashore and wrecked in comfort or held alongside with grappling hooks and dismembered without further loss of time? The latter course was decided on and the Zoologist Department leapt on the body and proceeded to tear it limb from limb. Body snatchers! An overpowering effluvia enveloped us. The *Morrissey* became veneered in narwhal. The Zoological Department rolled up its sleeves and hacked away. Ghouls!

AN ARCTIC RODEO

The narwhal was fourteen feet ten inches in length, female and plump. After it was stripped of as much flesh as possible its chassis was hauled aboard and dismembered for storage. Nothing is simpler than the pursuit and capture of a dead narwhal.

All our thoughts revolved around walrus now. We were soon to grapple with the Elephant of the North, the great meat producer of the Eskimo. That hunting walrus was not child's play we had gathered from a cursory glance at what the authorities had to say on the subject. "What savage-looking brutes they were!" exclaims Peary. "Their great heads armed with gleaming white tusk, their small deepset, bloodshot eyes, and their thick bristle-studded lips, opening to give vent to the most vicious bellows." Weighing upwards of a ton, yet possessing remarkable quickness, one is warned by MacMillan that "Uncertainty as to action is written all over a walrus, as is shown by the large number of casualties incurred in the chase." Then he proves his point by recounting a few walrus atrocities: "In Spitzbergen, some years ago, a herd assumed the offensive, upon being attacked, cap-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

sized the boat, and killed every man. In 1908 a bull walrus attacked Sipsoo, an Etah native, capsized his kayak, cut his throat, and left him for dead. In 1910, Arklio, one of the best and most skillful hunters in the tribe, was attacked and nearly lost his life. The walrus whipped around when harpooned, rushed at Arklio, and drove his tusk completely through his arm. In 1908 some fifty walrus attacked our whaleboat, undeterred by the frightful yells of the thoroughly terrified natives, who were beating the rails and water with oars, and the crash of a stream of bullets from my Winchester automatic and Borup's powerful Mauser. Two of the animals succeeded in hooking their tusks over the rail. The following year in a similar attack one broke through the bottom of the boat. No, the fighting qualities of a walrus are truly to be respected, and dealt with accordingly."

That's pretty strong meat to feed a peaceful citizen whose only idea is to have a little good clean fun. The more we heard about them the less we liked them, until our distaste amounted to what might almost be termed an antipathy. However, George didn't suggest any change in his plans, so

AN ARCTIC RODEO

we gave ourself a course in forgetting instead of remembering.

By mid-afternoon we were half across Murchison Sound, with Karna but a few miles away. Suddenly three walrus were sighted, asleep on a pan of ice; dark brown streaks on a lump of white crystal, floating on a sapphire sea—a cold, but romantic, couch.

At once all was confusion. Our moment had arrived! George ran for his rifle, Pathé ran for his camera, Static ran to the wireless to broadcast the news of the fight to the papers, Neilson ran for his harpoon, everybody else ran up the rigging to witness the gory spectacle that was to follow. We were expected to produce the effect of a Roman Holiday, but as is generally the case on holidays, when the launch was lowered the engine refused to start. It was wheedled, coaxed, even threatened, but not a single cough escaped from its cast iron lungs. The walrus slept on.

Then a dory was flung overboard. Neilson took the bow oars, with his harpoon handy. We took the stern oars, with our rifle between our knees, while George and Pathé took the stern seat. Everybody

AN ARCTIC RODEO

else took the opportunity of offering sound advice. George was to plug the first. Then we were to drop the oars and plug number two. Pathé was to turn the crank, while Neilson was to flesh his harpoon into any animal that got into the water and prevent its sinking. We bent our backs to the oars. The walrus slept on.

The essence of any attempt to approach walrus sleeping on a pan of ice is velvet silence, and we hadn't traveled a hundred yards before it became apparent that as an instrument for the production and dissemination of noise a Grand Banks dory, with wooden thole pins and oars full of slivers, is exactly one hundred per cent efficient. We were merely broadcasting the suggestion to all nearby wild life that it had better temporarily remove itself. We paused and went into conference. The walrus slept on.

"We've got to muffle these oars," someone suggested. It had a salty, romantic ring to it. The term "muffled oars" is apt to raise the picture of a dark night and dirty work afoot.

"How can we?" said Pathé. "We haven't got

AN ARCTIC RODEO

any muffles.” He made it sound like something to eat.

“Lend us your handkerchief,” snapped George.

“Haven’t got one,” said Pathé.

“Neither have I,” George was forced to admit. Then it developed that there wasn’t a handkerchief in the crowd. Finally we got a piece of somebody’s shirt, wrapped it around the oars and proceeded. The walrus slept on.

We were forty yards away. Why didn’t they move? They must have heard us, yet they lay there as though drugged. In the brilliant sunshine every hair on their fat bodies stood out with stereoptic distinctness. They looked like three corpulent roués stretched out on the marble slab of a Turkish bath.

Now we were thirty yards away. George stood up and fired. Simultaneously, the dory shipped half a barrel of water. It would be difficult to say where the shot struck—somewhere in Greenland certainly. The walrus decided to give up sleeping. Raising their heads they regarded us with blear-eyed amazement. The dory pitched and tossed so that George emptied his rifle respectively toward

AN ARCTIC RODEO

the sky, the bottom of the sea and the approximate location of Amsterdam.

According to the prearranged plan, it was my turn to shoot now, and from the look of things something pretty dashing was called for. But in the confusion one of the oars had somehow insinuated itself up my trouser leg. This was not part of the prearranged plan. In fact, it was more or less of an unexpected development.

One by one the walrus lumbered into the sea. My first shot was at the tailpiece of the last one. It was a little short, in all other respects it was a perfect exhibition.

For three minutes Pathé had been cranking steadily. Now he stopped. "Hell!" said George. As though responding to a toast, one of the walrus shot half out of the water a few feet away. Little rivulets ran from the end of his whiskers. He looked distinctly mumpish. He would certainly have been blown to judgment if I hadn't forgotten to push off the safety catch. They rose again, far in the distance, treading water and looking at each other as much as to say: "What next!"

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Neilson coiled his harpoon line. The hunt was over. We were picked up by the schooner.

III

For sheer gloom and funereal dreariness Inglefield Gulf is in a class by itself. Tumbled volcanic cones rise from the water's edge; wild, ragged peaks, unkempt and frowzy. Between them the inland ice oozes in long wrinkled tentacles like the scrofulous claws of some Silurian reptile. Like a glistening armada the offspring of the glaciers drift slowly down the Gulf towards Baffin Bay. It is all cold, relentless, chaotic; yet clouds as soft and tranquil as though they drifted over a Mediterranean landscape look down on this gelid barrenness, while the rays of the slanting sun, caught by countless prisms of ice and snow, paint it with the trembling colors of the rainbow. It is a prismatic Inferno. Nature spends its time contradicting itself.

As we neared the flotilla of bergs a lone kayaker, dressed in the most approved fashion of the Smith Sound Eskimo, shot out from their inner recesses. From all appearances he was a robust, vigorous in-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

dividual and his face was ornamented with a moustache, which was rather unusual for these regions. He was hauled aboard, kayak and all. Of course, he knew Rasmussen and was introduced as the most Northerly Missionary in the world. That made him a "Bishop" as far as we were concerned. Then it was merely a matter of minutes before he was breveted the "Hunting Bishop from Holstenborg." The fact that he wintered on Inglefield Gulf, and lived on the land, gave him undisputed right to his title. If hunting was good he lived easy on rich, red meat; if it was poor, he ate his kamiks and gloves, and filled in the chinks with reindeer moss. There's nothing like reindeer moss for upholstering a flat stomach, it is said.

Soon eight or ten more kayakers surrounded us. Their spirits ran high. Their flat faces were split from ear to ear in grins of welcome. Bartlett, Pritchard and Gushue were kept busy responding to cries of recognition. These middle-aged kayakers were the small boys of the old days.

We threaded our way between the bergs, through watery avenues, alleys and byways, until at length we anchored off Karna.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

The Doctor, who hadn't had a taste of blood for some time, at once went ashore and "grouped" the populace. The Chief Engineer, Rasmussen and the Bishop made feverish preparations for a three-day trip to the head of Inglefield Gulf; a rump expedition for the purpose of securing some narwhal specimens. The rest of us prepared to spend the next three days coasting around Herbert Island and Cape Colin, walrus hunting. Nette prepared to spend the interval with the Bishop's wife—a round-faced Eskimo lady with her hair done in a bun on the crown of her head. The citizenry of the town prepared to derive hilarious entertainment at our expense.

Around midnight we all drifted into the warm interior of the Bishop's Palace. It was a low sod house about 15x18, lined on the inside with matched boards. Its single room was entered through a sod passage eight feet long and so low one was obliged to bend double and waddle. Within, the roof was slightly raised in the center. At the ridge-pole a short person could stand erect. Toward the side walls it was necessary to slouch. One could

AN ARCTIC RODEO

have covered the length of the room in two moderate jumps.

A corner was occupied by a raised, wooden bed-platform, with a hinged portion that could be let down and tucked out of the way in the daytime. There was a board table, a stand of drawers and another narrow bed-platform across one end of the room. Then came two extraordinary pieces of furniture. The first was a modern, well-polished kitchen stove looking strangely out of place. The second was a scarred and battered melodeon that bore all the earmarks of being a howler.

Beyond this there was nothing; no pictures; no decorations; no jimcracks or heirlooms of any description. Next the stove hung a few cups, a stew pot, tea pot, coffee pot. That was the beginning and the end of the culinary department.

A few kamiks were drying over the stove; while a herd of small children rolled around on the floor, sucking strips of raw, rancid narwhal skin. No one of these items was conducive to atmospheric purity.

A community bowl of narwhal skin stood beneath the stove. Anyone who felt the need of a little

AN ARCTIC RODEO

soothing reached in for a piece. Each strip was prepared for consumption by slicing it at intervals so that small cubes could be pulled loose; otherwise it was like trying to bite the end off a piece of garden hose.

The female portion of the gathering was modeled along Mongolian lines, with slanting eyes, folded lids and high cheek bones. As the local diet list contains a great deal of fat, much oil exuded from their pores. Mascara was unknown, likewise Tan-gee. Facial first aids would have been powerless. There's no use trying to teach an old pore new tricks.

The Bishop apparently possessed more energy than he knew how to handle, but outside of that he made an ideal host, continually passing little shots of black coffee brewed over a fire which had practically reached the vanishing point.

At length, the Bishop dragged a violin out from under the bed-platform. Neither he nor any of the Eskimos could play it, but its possession seemed to afford them great comfort. Pathé scraped out a tune or two. The Bishop responded with a couple of hymns, accompanying himself on the melodeon.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

The airs were well-known to us, but the Eskimo words sounded weird and barbaric. The melodeon developed the heaves, the Bishop's voice cracked. Pathé made the fiddle sound as though someone had stepped on a cat's tail. A hundred dogs tethered outside threw back their heads and howled. Altogether it was a big earful. The future, the long dark winter, frost bite, starvation, misery all were forgotten. Without, the sun shone beautifully. Within, the kind of music one perspires over caused us all to live only for the moment.

Suddenly there was an excited cry. The noise ceased abruptly. Narwhal! There they were, shoal after shoal, running down the Gulf! A babble of wild yells broke out. The Bishop acted like one possessed—and that's just what he was, possessed with the single idea of capturing one of those narwhal. The hymn was forgotten. In ten seconds he had transformed from Prelate to primitive hunter. With one bound he jumped through the narrow sod window and galloped for his kayak, running into the water up to his knees in shoving it off. Ten seconds after the narwhal were sighted the house was deserted.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

The gulf was alive with arched rolling bodies. Their moist skins gleamed and sparkled. As they rhythmically rose and fell, the air forced from their enormous lungs through a vent on top of their heads hissed audibly, and formed a plume of mist that hovered above them like an evanescent halo. The long twisted ivory tusks projecting from their snouts were plainly visible. There were dozens of them. Here was meat for the long winter rolling right past the front door.

The chase commenced. Down from the head of the gulf the narwhal continued to come, shoal after shoal. Killer whales had driven them to the safety of shallow inland waters. This was their first migration back to the sea, we were told.

It was a splendid exhibition of primitive hunting, staged as though for our especial entertainment directly in front of the Bishopric. Half a dozen kayakers were strung out in a long row, motionless as bronze images, waiting for their prey. The narwal were obliged to run a gauntlet composed of primitive man after meat.

As a shoal passed, a kayaker followed it swiftly from behind, with the threefold purpose of keeping

AN ARCTIC RODEO

out of sight; of driving it so fast sounding would be difficult; and getting close enough to hurl a harpoon. Rifles were useless. A narwhal kill or wounded by a rifle bullet sinks like lead to the bottom of the sea, unless a sealskin float is attached by means of the harpoon.

Singly, and in groups, the narwhal were pursued by the kayakers. It looked like some kind of aquatic game. Harpoons were flicked, recovered, and flicked again, but none seemed to reach their mark. Soon fish and hunters had vanished into the labyrinth of bergs, and the surface of the gulf once more threw back, unbroken, the reflection of the serene Arctic sky.

IV

We returned to the igloo. It was 2 A.M. Sunday morning. The Bishop's lady now did the honors. From the soles of her spotless kamiks to her shiny topknot she was unequivocally Eskimo. Astri on her starboard hip rode a small infant. It clung to her like some kind of fungus growth. No matter where her duties called her, over the stove, out to feed the dogs, into the mysteries of some kind

AN ARCTIC RODEO

tailoring involving the vigorous use of a bone needle, this infantile leech stuck to her. Her attitude was one of complete indifference. She seemed to regard this adhesion as an act of fate, to be entirely ignored save when it was occasionally cheered up with a strip of narwhal skin.

Kakutia was another Aborigine that attracted one's attention. He was an Eskimo artist. All he lacked was paper and pencils. Panikpah, his father, had been an artist before him. It was an inherited gift. For subjects he drew on the concrete facts of his surroundings, such as dogs, sleds, kayaks, Arctic animals and incidents of the chase. He attempted nothing involving an abstract idea, which made his work easy to comprehend, and such was the simplicity of his life a couple of dozen sketches covered the entire range of his experience. Then he commenced all over again.

Neils, the Bishop's young brother, now began to toy with the "push and pull." Rasmussen's heels started tapping. In five minutes a dance was in full swing, which lasted until 3:30 when Rasmussen hit his head on the roof beam. At this juncture the Bishop returned with the news that two narwhal

AN ARCTIC RODEO

had been killed a little way up the Gulf. Around five A.M. they were towed alongside the schooner. Plaster casts were made of the head, flippers, air vent; they were hoisted into the rigging and photographed from every conceivable angle; they were pinched, poked, slapped and then cut up into pieces suitable for pickling. Their length was about fourteen feet, their tusks about six feet.

As they are hunted more or less on a community basis, the results of the chase are divided in the same manner. The first man to sink his harpoon in the animal receives the head and tusk; the next to arrive on the scene is entitled to a certain recognized number of ribs, and so on down the line until everyone is taken care of. It is not necessary to be in at the death. Anyone with energy enough to push a kayak into the water qualifies, so the fact that laziness is considered as lying about halfway between a sin and a crime in the Arctic is not difficult to comprehend.

About now we began to feel that if narwhals passed out of our lives forever we could stand it without complaining.

The Bishop, Rasmussen and Chief Engineer left

AN ARCTIC RODEO

for a three-day trip to the head of Inglefield Gulf. For the Chief, this was a particularly alluring adventure. His father had labored twenty-five years in the Arctic and finally achieved the distinction of discovering the mathematical point on the earth's crust known as the North Pole. His father was Admiral Peary. Again, just a few miles from where we lay at anchor, or a little over seven hundred miles from the Pole, his sister, Little Ahnighito, the Snow Baby, had been born. However, fate selected a much less dramatic region for the nativity of the Chief, so he was the only member of this illustrious Arctic family who had never been further North than Maine. He was experiencing all the sensations of returning to the ancestral estate, and the opportunity of living the life of the Arctic Aborigine was full of significance for him. His equipment for the trip consisted of a seal-skin koulatah, bearskin trousers, kamiks, a large appetite and matted red beard. He was so hirsute he looked like a yak.

They departed, and before they were out of sight we were off on a walrus hunt.

CHAPTER XV

It's easier to doctor up an old maxim than make a new one.

THE AUTHOR.

I

WE left Karna well supplied with native hunters and kayaks. Besides the Bishop's brother, there was Poodluna, Tookashue, Ksingwah and Kudluktu, all of whom had been with Peary on his last expedition. The artist, Kakutia, turned out copy with the speed of comic strip. The entire Poodluna family, which seemed to reach from the cradle to just short of the grave, lolled about the deck. There was plenty of material to work with—all we needed now were walrus.

We coasted along the shore of Herbert Island until the freshening wind drove us into Refuge Harbor—the same anchorage we made for after the wreck, and there we remained wind-bound for twenty-four hours. It's not a bad idea in the

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Arctic to get wind-bound. It gives one a chance to catch up on his sleep.

At length, around six P.M. a herd of walrus was sighted far off against the shore of Herbert Island. Five kayakers at once set out after them. We slowly followed. Several herds now suddenly appeared from nowhere. The kayakers split up and pursued, making several unsuccessful casts. Then, almost simultaneously four harpoons were driven home and the sealskin floats went bobbing over the placid waters of the Bay. From now on the whole night was filled with walrus—walrus in various states of rage or depression—walrus dead and walrus very much alive. Nature has so arranged it that a walrus never changes into a zebra, nor do they have musk-oxen for children. It is their biological fate to remain walrus throughout eternity, and from what we saw that night it would be hard to imagine a more depressing fate.

The Eskimo hunters having attached to the animals the floats equipped with small drags like sea anchors, we were supposed to put off in the boats and give the *coup de grâce* with a rifle bullet. In ordinary native hunting a harpooned walrus would

AN ARCTIC RODEO

be allowed to exhaust itself rushing about. Then the Eskimo would be able to drive his kayak close enough to lance the beast to death. The technique employed by the native in walrus hunting seemed very similar to that followed in bull fighting; except that the Eskimo received no applause for special adroitness, in spite of the fact that any lack of it sent him down for a long sleep in the primordial ooze of the sea bottom.

With Joe the sailor to supply motive power we set out in a dory, convoyed by Poodluna and Ksingwah in their kayaks. Ksingwah's eyes were so inflamed and rheumy he was barely able to see his hand before his face, but this did not seem to dampen his lust for blood. He was intent on piling up enough meat to see him through the long night.

We approached the nearest float and waited. Fifty feet beneath the surface a ton of walrus also waited—waited until the last scintilla of oxygen in his enormous lungs was exhausted before rushing to the surface for another breath. Fifteen minutes passed. It seemed an hour. Then, with a rush that carried him half out of the water, the old ox surged up for air. He had stayed down so

AN ARCTIC RODEO

long he was about ready to burst. The result was we received his fetid breath in one great blast straight in the face. It was like the whiff of an anæsthetic. This was the first time we had ever had a walrus explode right in our face. Slightly dazed we sat and stared at him. His eyes were inflamed a bright crimson, his ivory glistened white as snow, his ridiculous whiskers both bristled with rage and dripped with water. Then he sounded, after inhaling enough air to produce a partial vacuum in the neighborhood.

Poodluna and Ksingwah both flicked harpoons in an effort to attach another float—but too late. For the next twenty minutes the bag rushed around and round in a circle like an electric hare. We followed.

Then he rose unexpectedly about ten feet behind us, which caused so much confusion we shot a hole in the sealskin float. Nobody can do this often and remain popular in the Arctic, but old Ksingwah more or less retrieved the day by plunging in another harpoon and soon the battle-scarred old beast dropped on his face with a bullet in his neck.

Now we drifted along in a receptive mood to see

AN ARCTIC RODEO

what the bay could afford. A large cow suddenly appeared under the face of a glacier. Riding on her back was a very young walrus. No matter how violently the mother rolled and plunged the young one clung to her, as though glued. "He's held on by force of circumstances," Joe remarked, but its marvelously pliant pair of little flippers probably supplied the force. The small infant that rode on the starboard hip of the Bishop's wife clung with no greater tenacity.

We left her and turned in the direction of a tremendous lowing and bellowing that was reverberating against the face of the adjoining glacier. At the moment we counted six herds of walrus variously disporting themselves. The nearest contained thirty or forty head. They stood in a ring, their bodies half out of water, and bawled at each other with damp, coarse voices.

Now they saw us, and sounded. A hundred yards away they rose, lined up and charged straight towards the dory. A few feet to one side sat the two Eskimo in their kayaks. If the skin coverings of these fragile craft were punctured or ripped they would sink instantly, or if the occupants made a

AN ARCTIC RODEO

false move the next second they would find themselves upside down in ice water. The two Eskimo clutched harpoons as primitive as those used by their ancestors. We clutched a high-powered rifle. Sailor Joe clutched the side of the dory; his eyes were beginning to stick out.

On came the walrus. As they rolled through the water they puffed and panted in a way that was unpleasantly dramatic. There were several cows and clinging to their backs, regarding the scene with juvenile excitement, rode their small walrus children. As these Arctic elephants charged down on us it looked as though we were about to be buried under an avalanche of ivory.

We glanced obliquely at the Eskimos in their skin cockle shells to see how they were going to handle the situation. Apparently they had no definite ideas on the subject. Leaning carelessly over their paddles they seemed to be giving themselves up entirely to the enjoyment of the moment. Fifty tons of Arctic pot-roast was coming down on top of us! Yet its only effect on them was to make their mouths water!

Close they came—and closer—fifty yards—forty

AN ARCTIC RODEO

—thirty—twenty! We could smell their fetid breaths! The next instant we would know what it felt like to be hit by an irresistible force. The natives began to yell and pound on their kayaks with their paddles. Impulsively we emptied our rifle into the water. With a final bellow they plunged beneath the dory, leaving the sea agitated as though by a maelstrom. For an instant their bodies were visible as they flashed under us—a weird, shimmering fleet of submarines. Then they rose ten yards away and slowly vanished into the distance.

Wiping the perspiration from our forehead we turned toward the Eskimos. They sat in their kayaks laughing. “Wonderful sport, isn’t it?” we suggested to Joe. “What do you think of Arctic whoopee?”

“I could do with a cup of coffee,” was his reply.

By this time the schooner, which had been tooling about picking up dead walrus, was only a speck in the distance. We relaxed and drifted idly.

“If anything more happens now it will be what they call an anti-climax,” we remarked to Joe.

“It would be what I’d call monotonous,” he

AN ARCTIC RODEO

answered. "If you asks me, the only trouble with this place is there's too many walrus." The words were no more than out of his mouth before we suddenly found ourselves in the center of about sixty specimens so tough and evil looking they were a disgrace to the animal kingdom. They fumed, foamed and fulminated a few yards away, evidently busy lashing themselves into a rage, and the things they called each other in the process were worth listening to. Now half-blind Ksingwah began to paddle slowly towards them. In a gibbous formation they waited, hoarsely singing their "battle cry" of "awik—awik—awik!" With feline movements he edged closer and closer, then like a madman charged straight into their midst. It seemed nothing less than suicide. He was playing with death. In less time than it takes to tell it that kayak could have been knocked to blazes and old Ksingwah with it. But miracles still happen. As he shot toward the center of the seething mass their courage oozed away, their ferocity melted into fear and abruptly they beat an ignomious retreat to the bottom of the Sound. But Ksingwah had fixed his harpoon in the tail of a young bull.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Now the problem was to cut the wounded animal out of the herd, which apparently had no idea of leaving a comrade in distress. By means of a great deal of shouting and pounding on the kayaks with paddles, and shooting over their heads, we finally drove them off and brought the bull to bag. We were out of floats by this time, so it was necessary to tow this fellow in. A two mile row, dragging a dead walrus, is our idea of the worst that can happen to one in a rowboat. There is positively no glamour in it.

Our first walrus, and two others, were on board, a fourth was being dispatched right alongside. It was lovely. We all sat on the rail, with our feet hanging over, and watched. The Skipper, Archer and George were hovering around in the launch waiting for an opportunity to dodge in and deliver a body blow. The walrus, with great strategy and skill, eluded all their attempts to approach him. At length the Skipper, who belongs to the school that believes in direct action, seizing the tiller, ran the launch plunk into the animal. With a roar the walrus dove under the boat, turned on his back and threw his flippers around it in a hug that made

AN ARCTIC RODEO

its ribs crack. Then he plowed his tusks through the bottom. These snags were something like two feet long and as big as a man's wrist. This act of vandalism annoyed the Skipper, so, grabbing a lance, he leaned over the side and fleshed it to the hilt in the neck of the old bull.

"Take that," he yelled.

"Go to it, Skipper," we cheered him. It was all very interesting.

Convulsively the massive muscles relaxed. With a final toss of his scarred tusks he fell back, dead.

Then the launch began to sink. As a spectacle this was even more interesting and strangely enough nobody seemed to be able to find a line to throw them until they were just about to make their final plunge. Then they were hauled aboard.

All night long this kind of thing went on until the bodies of seven walrus, and a live calf, were piled up on the schooner's decks. We staggered under our load of beef. The faces of the Eskimo were split with broad smiles of satisfaction. Here was a fine start on the winter's meat supply. The only living thing on board that did not seem entirely happy was the young calf. It moaned and wailed

AN ARCTIC RODEO

pitifully. An attempt to feed it condensed milk by means of a rubber tube was scornfully repulsed. At length, it crawled laboriously to the dead body of its mother, some uncanny instinct enabling it to pick her out from all the others. Then with a bleat of satisfaction it settled down to sleep with its muzzle against hers, apparently content.

After fifteen hours of walrus hunting the Skipper was suddenly seized with a fit of tidiness. He studied the congested condition of the deck for some time in silence, then exploded. "Mother of men!" he yelled, "are we going to have order on this ship or not?"

"Not," somebody murmured sleepily under his breath.

"All hands turn to and straighten out the deck cargo," he bellowed.

"Awik—awik—awik," echoed a distant herd of walrus.

Yet there was a persuasive quality to the Skipper's suggestion that convinced all of us that straightening out the deck cargo was far more important than sleep.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

II

The next two days we lay to at Refuge Bay and recovered from the effects of the walrus orgy, so a splendid opportunity to become acquainted with the flower and chivalry of the Arctic presented itself.

Certain phases of their lives are described by Admiral Peary: "In regard to morals," he says, "these people do not stand high according to our standards. The wife is as much a piece of personal property, which may be sold, exchanged, loaned or borrowed, as a sledge or canoe." This is rather a neat way of handling matrimony. If the wife develops annoying habits she may be traded in for a later model, or swapped for a kayak. Yet the Admiral goes on to say: "It must be said in their favor, however, that children, as well as aged and infirm members of the tribe, are well taken care of, and that for the former the parents evince the liveliest affection." This was very apparent even to our inexperienced eyes, for a man never moved very far without three or four small skin-clad infants hanging to his fingers. And in this respect a

AN ARCTIC RODEO

strange similarity between an Arctic family and its Equatorial equivalent becomes noticeable. Though climatic conditions are diametrically opposed, the connubial arrangements are essentially the same.

“There seems to be no marriage ceremony. The matrimonial arrangement is frequently perfected by the parents while the parties are children.

“As the female is eligible for marriage much earlier than the male, a girl may be appropriated, before her intended is old enough to marry, by a man whose wife has died. This arrangement may continue or her intended may claim her when he is old enough. . . . Wives are frequently exchanged—or loaned.”

This is not quite as bad as it sounds, for it seems that in these regions a wife is selected not for beauty of face or form or the charm of her mentality, but rather with special reference to the quality of her teeth and her skill as a tailor. Clothes are just as important as food, and good teeth are the first requisite of good tailoring, for before the skins may be fashioned into trousers, shirts or moccasins the seams must be softened by a vigorous chewing so

AN ARCTIC RODEO

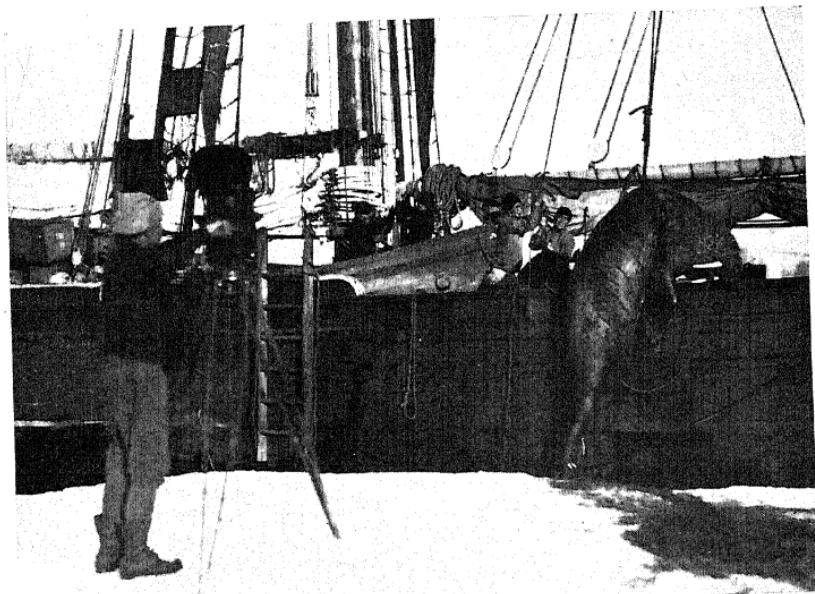
the bone needle will pass through. Again, dry clothes are of great importance. The first act of the hunter on returning to the family igloo is to remove his wet skin clothing, which is promptly hung up to dry by his wife. In the process of drying, shirt, trousers and moccasins become stiff as armor plate, so long before the head of the family is awake the faithful wife rises to chew his moccasins and trousers into such a condition of pliability as will permit of further use.¹ This is her breakfast. There is much nourishment in a pair of sealskin moccasins. The Eskimo woman appears to spend the greater part of her time chewing her husband's wardrobe. Obviously, the bachelor labors under a great handicap; and "as males are considerably in excess there is a constant demand for wives."

¹ It is the custom among Eskimos to warm everything by placing it on the abdomen; hands, feet, frozen pemmican or anything else in need of temporary treatment receive the genial warmth that radiates from this portion of their anatomy; and there, when in the field, wet moccasins and gloves are placed to dry during the night.

Mr. Gibson tells of a friend of his who stopped at an igloo during a journey. He was received with the utmost hospitality. His host at once cut him a strip of narwhal skin, while his hostess removed his moccasins, dried them and then, as she chewed them into a state of pliability, warmed his feet against her abdomen.



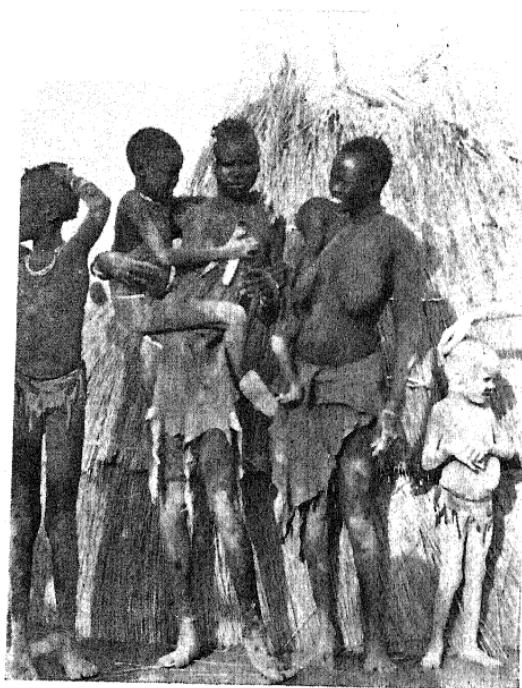
KSINGWAH FIXES HIS HARPOON IN THE TAIL OF A YOUNG BULL.



"HOLD IT," YELLED PATHÉ. HE WOULD!



IN THE ARCTIC, WOMAN'S PLACE IS THE HOME. "THEY ARE AS MUCH A PIECE OF PERSONAL PROPERTY AS A SLEDGE OR KAYAK."



AN ARCTIC RODEO

In view of all this, it is easy to understand why a widower or bachelor might suggest to his more fortunate neighbor: "How about a loan of the wife for a few days? My business suit is as stiff as a board, and I've got to get somebody to chew up a new pair of trousers for me."

However, regardless of sex, these people seemed to be thoroughly human. We heard of an elderly lady who purchased one of a pair of twins for a fry pan and puppy, and then complained bitterly because she thought she'd picked out the worst one. She never used a fry pan in her life and puppies were plentiful; it wasn't the price, she merely became suspicious on general principles, after the bargain had been completed, that she had gotten the worst of it. That's human.

Rasmussen told of another old lady at Lyon's Inlet who spent much of her time boasting of what a superior fisherman her husband was. That's family pride. But when she attempted to remove any possibility of contradiction by explaining that the reason of his great success lay in the fact that he always charmed the fish, by swallowing hook, line and sinker and pulling the same out of his

AN ARCTIC RODEO

navel, she carried even her marital pride a little too far. That's human too.¹

None of the men, women or children on the schooner would eat ham or bacon. They never used salt and its presence seemed to revolt them, yet they would eat food with seasoning in it. A pan full of odds and ends from the galley never went begging. The most approved method of handling such material was to roll up a ball about the size of a cocoanut and ram the same as far down the æsophagus as a couple of sinuous fingers could push it. Yet there is nothing new about this manner of eating. We have often watched boys going through the same motions in Equatorial

¹ At times the women are seized with a form of hysteria. This is the only emotional relaxation they indulge in. But long stretches of continuous daylight and darkness, monotony of diet and rigors of weather get them at intervals. They then will unexpectedly jump up and attempt to walk on the ceiling, or divesting themselves of their clothes, rush out and lie in a snow bank or devote five or six hours to uttering weird cries. Sometimes they just swoon. At such times nobody appears to pay any attention to them. In due season they come to and go about their business as though nothing had happened. When enjoying this form of relaxation they are vulgarly described as being "piblokto." "Piblokto" is a form of rabies Eskimo dogs are subject to.

Even the men get "piblokto" occasionally. We have been "piblokto" ourselves several times, but never knew what it was.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Africa. The Eskimos wore the skins of animals. The Africans wore their own skins. That was the only noticeable difference.

When eating strips of narwhal or seal the Eskimo was even more ambitious, the morsel being shoved down the throat until the subject began to strangle slightly. Then it was cut off at the lips with a sharp knife. The only drawback to this system lay in the risk of slicing off the end of the nose. But here again the Eskimo must not be given credit for originating something new. The African has been following the same technique from time immemorial.

III

Now we returned to Karna. We had our fill of walrus. In fact, the Cabin Boy and Static both agreed they could get along for some time without any further reference to them. Their upper bunks were located just under the joint in the deck where the miniature poop deck began, and the seam at this point seemed to be minus its oakum, for the morning after the big hunt they both woke up drenched from head to toe with walrus blood. All night long

AN ARCTIC RODEO

it had leaked through on them, and if they had deliberately bathed in it they couldn't have looked more sanguinary.

When we cast anchor at Karna the first person to greet us was Rasmussen. His party had captured three narwhal; a male, female and young one, so, Allah be praised, that phase of collecting was successfully completed. The schooner was a floating cemetery full of bones and cadavers. Pathé took pictures of this narwhal group on the beach, using flares to make a nice green light, and plenty of Eskimos eating narwhal skins like pelicans to add a barbaric touch.

This orgy was followed by some good lusty hymn singing around the Bishop's melodeon, which in turn almost imperceptibly developed into an exceedingly athletic dance. At intervals we were cheered on with strong tea.

At 7 A.M. when we returned to the schooner for breakfast, though it had been broad daylight all night, nature from force of habit seemed to be going through the motions of an elaborate sunrise. The wild peaks and glaciers of Inglefield Gulf were diffused with soft colors. The inland ice glistened as

AN ARCTIC RODEO

though inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The stillness was intense. We seemed the sole inhabitants of an empty world floating in an infinite void. This feeling was probably due to an excessive consumption of tea.

We were about to head for the South—and home. The Bishop, in front of his sod hut, delivered a long address. Rasmussen responded, but as the language employed was Eskimo it all sounded somewhat intricate, yet it was impressive enough. Then there were three cheers. We waved the natives a long farewell and left them, a hospitable, generous, happy and contented handful of humanity, guarding their desolate inheritance on top of the world.

For several miles we were trailed by twelve kayakers. The Bishop was entertained on board with sweet champagne—a present from the Danish Navy—and the usual strong cigars. At length he dropped his kayak over, there was a round of flat reports from the muzzle loaders and that's the last we saw of them.

IV

The Poodlunas were taken back to their summer home on Northumberland Island and on the

AN ARCTIC RODEO

way we sighted walrus, but, as it took an hour to get the launch started, the walrus looked things over at their leisure and departed; the only results of the morning's hunt consisted in incandescent profanity.

The fact that there had been a complete absence of homicides, brutal stranglings and poisonings on the voyage to date was a splendid testimonial to the indefatigable good nature of the twenty men cooped up on the schooner with no chance of escaping each other. If constant propinquity generally leads to violence there had been no evidence of it so far. In fact, most everyone had even become more or less reconciled to the way Billy the Cook boiled his potatoes.

At midnight the Skipper jerked the bells. We set out across the North Water for Jones Sound. Greenland sank into the sea behind us.

CHAPTER XVI

The production of great literature requires leisure. When Cervantes wrote "Don Quixote" he was in jail.

B. L. T.

I

BAFFIN BAY is divided into what is known as the North Water, Middle Water and South Water, and even in the summer the intervening areas are usually full of ice. We were to cross the North Water bound for Jones Sound and polar bears.

Legend would lead one to expect the worst of the region we were now traversing. It has a shady reputation. Yet we bowled all day over a clear sea of deep navy blue, frosted here and there with snow white foam where a too ambitious wavelet overreached itself. The air was balmy, the sky cloudless. The middle of the afternoon the breeze grew

AN ARCTIC RODEO

decidedly brisk. We began to toss violently. Several glasses of Rasmussen's beer, with sardines and cake for supper, collaborated in giving us several anxious moments. Yet just before supper was announced Rasmussen, Neilson and Nette repaired to the deck for a light snack of rancid narwhal skin and seal blubber that hung in the shrouds.

Now it got really rough. Below, everything that wasn't nailed down slid to port. Our bunk, being on this side, became the resting place of the entire ship's library. It looked as though we were about to pass the night with some of the world's greatest authors. Never once during the whole course of the expedition did the schooner heel to starboard. She was a left handed schooner.

Then vague snowy outlines developed in the southwest; faint hills became fair-sized mountains; then they gradually grew into ice-capped peaks, jagged and forbidding. As we approached the north end of Coburg Island, precipitous, strangely colored cliffs rose abruptly from a narrow strip of beach against which the surf pounded. Then we were off Princess Charlotte's Monument; a high, conical rock rising like a gigantic spire from the sea.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

We now followed the shore of Coburg and Kent Islands keeping a sharp lookout for polar bears. This was supposed to be a paradise for bears, but from our point of view it was merely the barrenest region we had yet struck.

We passed through Lady Ann Strait into Jones Sound. It was a fine sunny day, clear and calm. The shore of Devon Island lay a stone's throw to the south of us. We were in Canada now, as might be suspected from the Imperial sound of the names given to various prominent landmarks. "Lady Ann Strait" was easy to understand, so was "Princess Charlotte's Monument," but how good old Jones ever managed to crash this aristocratic geographical party was a mystery.

During the morning while some of us idled away the time in the after-cabin, the Skipper entered and picked up an Oxford Book of English Verse. He stood, wrapped in a leprous old ulster, feet apart, silently thumbing the pages for some moments. "I'll read you my favorite poem," he said at length, and turned to Henley's "Invictus." "There's nothing finer than that," he assured us, "though the 'Last Words of Emily Brontë' are marvelous."

AN ARCTIC RODEO

He quoted them from memory, swaying backwards and forward on wide-spread legs. "All of Kipling is good," he then volunteered, and without another word he wiped his mouth on the back of his hand, climbed the companion ladder and disappeared on deck.

Jones Sound runs almost east and west along the seventy-sixth parallel of latitude. One harbors the suspicion that as a possession this region takes up more room than it is worth. It might be possible to raise mink up here, but a particularly broad-minded breed of mink would be required.

About 3 A.M. the engine was shut off and we drifted, wrapped in a diaphanous pall of fog. As soon as its noise ceased the silence was impressive. It was one of those cosmic silences, ponderable and reverberating; the throbbing of the great void. Every expedition runs into such a silence sooner or later and speaks of it.

Most of us were lying around listening to the silence when Static, who was exercising the radio, began to show signs of extreme nervousness. "I'll bet he's got Hammond, Indiana," someone suggested.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

“No, it’s more likely one of those nearby stations like Tasmania,” was the reply.

At this point Sparks removed his ear muffs and said: “It’s the *New York Times*.”

“That’s a novelty,” a voice from the dark remarked. “They’re buying your stuff and have one of the most powerful receiving sets in the East, yet this is about the first time you haven’t had your story relayed to them via Indo-China or Terra del Fuego.”

It seemed that Mrs. George in New York was about to talk to her husband eight hundred and fifty miles from the Pole. This was something of an event. For the first time the roof of the world was to be linked with the corner of Broadway and Forty-second Street. The mystery of the silent places was to be shattered! No more was there to be such a thing as remoteness! At the appointed moment George wrote out his message and handed it to Sparks. The words that were to ring half around the world were pregnant with meaning: “How are you?” he asked.

Sparks turned on his motor and broadcast. We waited, tense with excitement. Sparks stopped

AN ARCTIC RODEO

broadcasting, put on his ear muffs, then began to write. Four thousand miles of space had been annihilated. His pencil ceased to move, he handed the paper to Jarge: "I'm all right. How are you?" it read.

When the fog lifted we headed for Sparbo Bay, to the west. Pack-ice baffled us, however, so at length we headed toward the post of the Royal Mounted Police at Craig Harbor. This was the most northerly station of the R. M., but now they are said to be opening one on Kane Basin, and later another on the shore of the Polar Sea at Cape Sheridan, Grantland—about three hundred and fifty miles from the Pole. Thus the highest flung point of Canada will feel the strong arm of the Mounted. It became necessary to police these regions to keep the explorers in order. Virgin territory was becoming extinct in Canada so rapidly something had to be done toward preserving it.

On the way to Craig Harbor we were landed on a large pan of ice to stalk a slumbering bearded seal. After making an irreproachable stalk in a prone position, and worming our way through several puddles of ice water, we made a clean miss.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

The sky was cloudless, the light dazzling. The Mounted Police range instructions now occurred to us: "High lights—high sights, Low lights—low sights." But like most advice it is only good if one thinks of it at the right moment.

The Craig Harbor Police Station was deserted, the last occupant having committed suicide during the preceding winter.

The rest of the night was spent collecting walrus meat. Two were spotted asleep on a pan. Seven guns lined up on the forecastle. The barrage bagged them without their even waking up. Another, a hundred yards away, slept through the whole excitement as though drugged. When a walrus sleeps he throws his whole heart into his work.

II

Now, for the first time in weeks, we enjoyed the novelty of seeing the sun sink below the horizon. Shortly after midnight it vanished momentarily, a great ball of fire, and then the east put on its war paint of gorgeous, soft colors. Simultaneously a full yellow moon slid into the sky and turned the

AN ARCTIC RODEO

world the color of old ivory. Countless seals played about us; a skin of new ice was forming, which was a fairly pointed suggestion not to delay much longer in these regions.

At one-thirty A.M. George shot a bearded seal. Then we lowered the small boat and chased a wounded one for a couple of hours. The cold was intense. Not a breath of air stirred. We were in the midst of a silent, colorful solitude cemented with ice and frost. This was true except when our boat moved, then the new ice tinkled like breaking glass.

We returned to the schooner. Suddenly, Sailors Ralph and Jim began to bay loudly. They had sighted our first polar bear. It was sitting against a hummock on a distant ice floe, so they said, yet strain as we would our eyes failed to find it. Then, through the glasses, he became visible—a creamy yellow blot against the cold white ice. His black, buttonlike nose stood out like an interrogation point. Lazily squatting on his haunches he regarded the nocturnal beauties without emotion. Evidently fear had never entered his life. The animal, Man, was unknown to him. By now we were about six hundred yards away. He regarded us without in-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

terest. He became thoroughly bored. He lay down and went to sleep. Later it developed that his stomach was tightly packed with walrus meat, including some strange looking teeth and several large pieces of bone. This went a long way towards explaining his bland and languorous manner.

At the first outcry of "Bear!" the Skipper rushed to the deck in his underwear. In crisp nervous prose he enquired why we were "jerking the bells" for stop, full speed and reverse all at the same time; "did we want to take the engine out of her?" Then he saw the bear. "Wait till I get my pants on," was his only comment, and he disappeared down the companionway.

The bear proved to be on the opposite edge of a wide floe; a small open lane would permit our approach to within twenty or thirty yards. We churned into it. At fifty yards he became definitely aware of our presence. His curiosity was greatly aroused. After watching us, head cocked on one side for a few seconds, he galloped clumsily forward to investigate. With grotesque awkwardness he hurdled a small runnel of water. At each step he looked as though he was going to fall over his own

AN ARCTIC RODEO

feet. He was an uncouth, gangling bundle of white hair.

At twenty yards the rifles barked. The bear collapsed into a crumpled heap. His small black nose, his black eyes, even the black claws on his four ponderous feet, stood out against the ice with vivid distinctness; a small crimson stain appeared on the back of his neck; it grew and grew until his shoulders were shrouded in a red mantle. He had met Man at last.

The bow of the schooner was run up to his body, a rope was passed around it and soon he lay on deck, awkward and ungainly even in death.

It was four o'clock in the morning. The Skipper, in the grip of another fit of tidiness, ordered a general housecleaning. The idea was not without merit. The walrus, seals and bear were butchered, the meat piled neatly, or hung in the rigging in crimson festoons. The colorful beauty of the night still surrounded us; the full moon rode high in the heavens. We gazed up at it through a holocaust.

Then we headed for Lancaster Sound. That night saw us drop below the seventy-fifth parallel of latitude. We were slipping south on the run.



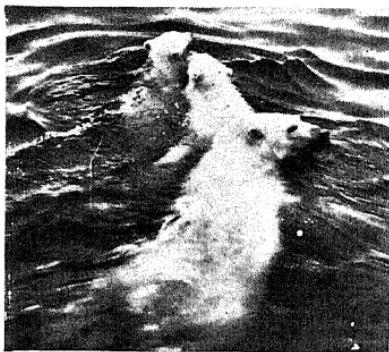
“WITH A BLEAT OF SATISFACTION THE YOUNG CALF SETTLED DOWN TO SLEEP.”



FOR SEVERAL MILES WE WERE TRAILED BY KAYAKERS.



THE COWBOY ROPE THEM AS THOUGH THEY WERE SALT WATER MAVERICKS.



THEY SLIPPED INTO THE WATER.



AN ARCTIC RODEO

III

During the night it grew extremely rough. About ten P.M. Neilson went to considerable pains in boiling some of the choicest ribs of the bear. In an hour the ribs were done to a turn. So was Neilson. He was so seasick he couldn't even groan, so we joined the Cowboy and Rasmussen in finishing them. They were fat and tasted not unlike pork.

All night we rolled heavily. At three A.M. the riding sail was bent, steadyng us somewhat. At four A.M. we were up for good, to find Billy the Cook with tousled hair roundly cursing "the one" who had let his galley fire go out. It was an artistic piece of work; a conclusive demonstration of how well tousled hair goes with round cursing.

Ever since we left Inglefield Gulf Nette had inhabited her curtained berth in the after-cabin. On the floor at the foot of her berth Rasmussen slept, while five of us occupied the remaining berths. She was full of housewifely instincts. She scrubbed the floor of the after-cabin and seemed to like it. She tidied up. She mended badly lacerated trousers. In between times she tailored a pair of bearskin

AN ARCTIC RODEO

trousers. A pleasant atmosphere of domesticity settled over the schooner. She was one of us. There was no mock modesty, yet she was treated with a courtliness and high-bred deference that was a tribute to her sex.

We had now glanced into the inner recesses of most of the Arctic animals, and strangely enough they seemed to be little more than playgrounds for parasites. We found both hair seals and bearded seals full of worms, a good double handful being about their average load. And, as bear feed largely on seal, they naturally inherit these pets. The narwhal, on the other hand, was plagued with creatures resembling lice that swarmed around the base of the tusk. As far as parasites go, the Arctic animals bore burdens fully as heavy as their African cousins.

It was just about this time that we unintentionally overheard a conversation that Sailor Joe Squires held with himself as he lay in his bunk. Evidently he had recently come across a small colony of insect vulgarly referred to as a bedbug. "Now there's a piece of luck for you, Joe," he was saying, "for when there's bedbugs there's never

AN ARCTIC RODEO

cockroaches and you know how cockroaches disgusts you."

We referred the matter to the Skipper for illumination. "It's a fact," he explained, "you're rarely bothered by the one and the other both at the same time. And anyway all this to-do about a harmless insect or two is more mental than anything else. When we used to winter in the Arctic we were nearly always lousy. But that is true of over sixty percent of the white race. Newfoundland sailors say that lice won't go to an unhealthy person. For this reason I have never minded being lousy when away on a long cruise." Here was news calculated to cheer the weary traveler.

"In the North," he went on, "we always had the women pick our shirts when we returned from a field trip. Even the Eskimos take their igloo skins out every few days and hang them in the cold air. As a result the lice get numb and can then be knocked off easily with a stick.

Bartlett's Arctic success is unquestionably due to his adaptability. When he attempted to remove the soot from the stove by pouring in flashlight powders he made a note to this effect: "As a soot re-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

mover they were a grand success. They removed everything—including the stove.” When traveling light in the Arctic, and every article must perform a multiplicity of duties, he advocates combing the hair with a fork. According to him the most positive alarm clock in the world is the ice when it cracks open under one’s bed. He also strongly endorses the Eskimo device of punching a small hole in the snow wall of an igloo so that when a certain star becomes visible through it one knows it is time for breakfast. Many times in his talk and writings he says: “From the condition of the coal oil I judged it was at least sixty degrees below zero.” This was the only thermometer he really took any stock in.

IV

For two days we were fog-bound, a large part of the time just idly drifting. Nobody seemed to have a very clear idea of our whereabouts, except that it was pretty evident we had overshot Lancaster Sound. About nine P.M. of the second day we ran into land rather abruptly, somewhere be-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

tween Eric Harbor and Cape Bowen—wherever they are—and dropped the dory over to lead us along the shore toward Pond's Inlet. Around midnight the fog broke for an instant and there, towering high above us, was a huge, conical mountain of rock and to one side of it, a high snow peak seemed to float on the billowing fog surrounding its base. They were striking landmarks, but apparently not considered worthy of mention by the Arctic Pilot. This groping around in unmarked, fog-bound waters was cold poison.

Life rolled round in a small circle of petty activities. The Archer, who hadn't slept for a week, was given a shot of dope and sent to bed. Regularly at ten o'clock each night Rasmussen, Neilson and Nette had their sedative of boiled seal meat. The realization that we were slipping south was beginning to fill them with a mild nostalgia. We ran out of drinking water. The dishes were rinsed in Baffin Bay, while at intervals we were treated to some of the distilled water brought along for the radio batteries. Most of us gave up washing as a pastime.

Day and night the forecastle echoed to the airy

AN ARCTIC RODEO

banter of its six inhabitants. Joe Squires, in particular, was outstanding as master of gentle irony and delicate innuendo. There were several topics on which it gave him sarcastic delight to dwell, such as the daintiness of his appetite, his inability to sleep and general omniscience. This particular afternoon he held forth somewhat as follows: "Here we is fog-bound in Baffin Bay. There ain't a man on this ship knows where we are at except one, Mr. Joseph Squires. But Mr. Squires ain't passing out no hints in this regard until the Skipper steps up and asts him point-blank: 'Where is we, Mr. Squires?'"

That eventuality never arose. We continued to fumble our benighted way into Pond's Inlet, past precipitous cliff and deserted foreshore, until one night we dropped anchor off the Posts of the Hudson's Bay Company and Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

v

We were invited to the Police Post for dinner. It did one's heart good to gaze on the quantity and variety of tinned goods piled up in their storehouse.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

George, who once took a correspondence course in cooking, made a rapid survey and offered to produce a lobster à la Newburg, if the Police would produce a bottle of rum for the sauce. This materialized in a matter of seconds. Then George let himself go on a sauce that stood right up on the plate and called you by your first name. There may have been some lobster mixed up with it, but if there was nobody paid any attention to it. The gravy took the spotlight and held it.

There was an informal dance, following which George entered into a single-handed contest, the nub of which involved getting the Expedition settled down for the night. As soon as he rowed one boat-load off to the schooner, and landed them on the port side, they immediately crossed to the starboard side and rowed ashore again in another dory. They wanted to go back and get some more gravy.

About eight-thirty A.M., if it makes any difference, we went ashore. The Constabulary were just emerging from something that looked like a coma. The Hudson's Bay Post invited us to morning coffee, after which there was a short interval of dancing.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

In the neighborhood of Pond's Inlet there are many old graves containing prehistoric weapons and implements. The old stone igloos of Aborigines also yield a harvest of spearheads, arrowheads, amulets and domestic utensils. By digging down through the various deposits of refuse that cover the floor one at length reaches the level of the original inhabitants. Both are pretty low.

The first expedition of the morning was to some graves and prehistoric igloos a couple of miles west of the Post. Many whale ribs were used in the construction of these dwellings. A lot of digging produced a few bone hair combs and spearheads.

Behind the village, on either side of a small brook, were rock graves. They had been plundered long since. We only found a skull or two, some trifling stone amulets and a great many mixed bones. Foxes, polar bears and Anthropologists had scattered them far and wide.

We followed the creek inland a mile or more to the top of a barren, rocky plateau, the chief verdure of which consisted in half a dozen varieties of moss. Miles of this cheerful scenery terminated in

AN ARCTIC RODEO

flattish mountains, white and hoary under blankets of snow. Many small lakes lay scattered about, and far in the distance was a notch in the mountains where the Salmon River cut through. The salmon run had ended just three weeks ago; the geese still lingered, while back in the hills browsed reindeer. It sounds like a land of mellow fruitfulness, yet in reality it was about as cheerless looking as a sight draft.

We stretched out on a bed of moss and listened to an indictment of the Hudson's Bay Company. For three hundred years this has probably been the most popular pastime of the wilderness. Yet, though Governments, and even Empires, have fallen during this period, the Hudson's Bay Company is still open for business.

Just before dusk we reached the crest of the hill overlooking the Post, and lay down to rest in the local cemetery. As there was no soil and the burials were all above ground this merely consisted in an informal row of wooden boxes that afforded very little privacy to the corpse.

The Cabin Boy brought in a couple of Arctic hares, weighing about ten pounds apiece—our first.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

They form an important item in the domestic economy of the Arctic. Their fur supplies clothing; their flesh is a delicacy, though weight for weight they probably produce more bones than anything else. Yet many an Explorer has been saved by an Arctic hare.

Both the Police and retainers of the Hudson's Bay Company seemed loth to say good-bye. The afternoon we left they all followed us down to Albert Harbor and spent the night. The long winter was about to wrap them in its deep calm. We were the last white men they would see for nine months. They slept on the floor of the after-cabin and liked it.

The next day we set out for Holstenborg to pick up our cargo of Professors. Civilization was beginning to loom. "I wonder if there are any good shows in New York," mused the Chief as we stood and enjoyed the novelty of the setting sun. The west was vivid with gold. Purple shadows filled the east. A few scattered icebergs were opalescent. Baffin Land resolved itself into white snow and inky rock. A silvery moon rode in the

AN ARCTIC RODEO

north. The sea rolled silently in long oily swells. Through them the schooner heaved lazily, wrapt in silence.

VI

We stumbled across our next polar bears two days later. Again, it was Jim and Ralph who sighted them floating on a distant iceberg—three cream-colored spots against a background of grayish white. It was a mother with two cubs. They were sole occupants of a sort of floating bungalow, fifteen miles from shore. Water was supplied by melting ice. At intervals the mother went marketing. Rent was free. It was a life of peaceful simplicity.

As we approached they all lay down and went to sleep. That was the way we seemed to affect all our bears. For some time we circled round the berg taking pictures. While this was going on, the mother supplied the young ones with a light lunch after the usual manner of young mothers. At length, we began to annoy her. She slipped into the water. The young followed. Once in the water they were undone, for a dory with half a pair of spruces could overtake them. They swam single

AN ARCTIC RODEO

file, the mother breaking a path for the little ones.

The ship was run alongside and the mother despatched. When she felt herself mortally wounded, the cubs sensing that something terrible was happening swam up and licked her face. Her nose dropped into the water. With a convulsive effort she raised her head and caressed the cub on her right, then turning to the one on the left she nuzzled it tenderly. Her head sank under the water. She was dead. As certainly as though she had uttered the words she had said "good-bye" to those cubs: "I'm all through. I've done everything I can for you. Now you will have to fend for yourselves." At this point several of us lost our appetite for bear hunting.

The young ones, bawling lustily, hurried away in different directions. Now the Cowboy mounting a dory neatly roped each in turn as it swam, as though they were salt water mavericks. They fought like young tigers when he passed the rope around their chests. Then the Burton swung them aboard with surprising suddenness, wrecking the galley stove pipe and causing a general stampede for high spots.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

They were soon housed in a hastily constructed pen in the forecastle, bound for the Bronx Zoo. Some half-decayed gulls were cut down from the rigging and thrown to them. They bolted feathers, bills, claws and all. Already their mother had been forgotten. They ate voraciously and fought over the feathers. Life is that way.

VII

Late that night out of a clear sky Static suddenly started slapping his knees and yelling: "Somebody give me a message for Australia. Come on! Quick!"

Nobody was even temperately interested. "He's gone soft again," the Chief suggested.

"For the love of Mike!" he wailed, "can't some of you fellows give me a message for Australia? I've got New Zealand and they'll relay it. We'll never get another chance like this!"

"Are these things relayed C.O.D.?" Pathé enquired.

"Sure," he answered.

"Then I'll send a message to an uncle of mine.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

He'll be glad to hear from me. We never did get on very well."

The coast of Greenland appeared on the horizon, and again the question arose as to whether to turn north or south. Finally uttering a short prayer the Skipper turned south.

Nette and Neilson busily prepared for their arrival in Holstenborg and subsequent departure for Denmark. For the first time in six years Neilson donned European dress. Kamiks, nanooks and koolatah were laid away for the symbols of civilization. He looked cramped, formal, self-conscious, like a chicken that had been half-plucked and then turned loose again.

That night we caught our first glimpse of the cold stars lavishly strewn across the sky, brilliant and scintillating. "They don't look as bad as I thought they did," admitted the Taxidermist, evaluating them with an appraising eye.

All the next day we ran south through a heavy sea. Our exact location continued to remain a mystery. About noon we sighted two vessels far down on the horizon. Driven by half a gale we bore down on one, end over end. It was the *Helder*

AN ARCTIC RODEO

of Bergen, a halibut fishing steamer. We swept under her stern. "What land is that?" Rasmussen yelled, pointing to the shoreline.

"Greenland!" was the answer.

"That's no news to us," bellowed the Skipper. "Where in Hell is Holstenborg?"

"Fifty miles to the north." And at Holstenborg, after shipping considerable water, we arrived ten hours later.

As we cast anchor the wind rose to a full gale outside, and though we were snug enough we couldn't help but wonder what was happening to the vessels anchored on the halibut banks. Greenland being a monopoly, no foreign vessels are allowed within the three-mile limit, so they were unable to pick up and run for shelter.

The Professors were waiting. When we left them in July the only equipment they had forgotten in the confusion of the moment was knives, forks and spoons, so all summer they had eaten with clam shell and vicious looking instruments made from the corners of tin cans. They had come to regard mosquitoes as in a class with cigarettes—they were all right if you didn't inhale them—and as for

AN ARCTIC RODEO

gnats! Every time they shut up a note book a swarm was pressed flat, so by the end of the summer they couldn't tell whether they were looking at their own figures or fly specks. Yet the fact that they had been present at the birth of a great deal of bad weather compensated for everything, they said. They would have given up shaving for life for the chance of acting as obstetricians to a tornado.

After supper most of us drifted to a small low-ceilinged room on the wharf, lighted by two candles. There, to the plaintive wailing of the "push and pull," we watched our last Arctic dance. Round and round circled the tightly packed mob. The air grew thick with mist; the scraping of moccasined feet drowned the music. Neilson, in store clothes, hung in a corner thoroughly uncomfortable. Not so Nette. She clung to skins, and comfort, to the bitter end. The sounds of the "push and pull" faded into silence. The candles were snuffed. We scattered through the rain to ship and sod hut.

CHAPTER XVII

*Oh, here's to the quiet, respectable street
Where the winds never howl and the waves never beat,
Where the ground has been trained to stick close to your
feet—
A health to the land, yo ho!*

T. YABARA.

I

WE said good-bye to Nette and Hans, kindly officials and guileless proletariat. Nette and Hans had become such an integral part of our lives it was hard to picture the schooner without them, yet the next full moon would find them in Denmark, caught in the whirlpool of civilization with its insignificant triumphs and colossal disappointments. Rasmussen was to continue on with us to New York.

The anchor was catheaded to the tune of our creaking backs. We sailed away from Greenland for better or worse. It was a beautiful sparkling day filled with deep perspectives, as though the

AN ARCTIC RODEO

atmosphere had been thoroughly washed and laundried by all the rain and wind. It was almost too fine a day. Such perfection usually ends up in a triple murder, or the explosion of an excursion steamer. Even as we hove anchor the omens began to accumulate, for the girls and boys working in the Government halibut cannery sang the "Prisoner's Song" so mournfully it made one want to throw back his head and howl. Nothing could have sounded more unpropitious.

Then, as we left the harbor, a small Norwegian fishing steamer entered it. All her dories but one were smashed, her rigging was in shreds, her flag at half-mast. There seemed but a handful of men left to work her. The gale had evidently turned her voyage into a tragedy. She looked like the trumpet of a prophecy.

And the climax was reached when it was discovered that it was George's birthday. "I couldn't help it," he complained. "It was beyond my control."

"That's why it's such a bad omen," it was explained to him. "If you can't control a little thing like a birthday it looks bad for us."

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Our six new passengers produced what might be fairly termed a congestion. Four were housed in bunks, while two of them slept on cots in the main cabin. There was not much choice, the privacy of both locations was about equal.

That evening there was a pathological sunset. Well up towards the zenith the sky was pale and anæmic. Then it mellowed to a layer of faint rose, very restrained and vestal in tone, which in turn became healthily ruddy and ended up in the kind of high-blood-pressure purple that used to be the signal for a lancet and a flock of leeches. Over all was the sinister greenish hue that generally results from mixing cherries and milk.

“The thing to know, when you try to describe a sunset like that, is where to draw the color line,” said the Taxidermist.

Nothing happened.

The next day a following breeze bowled us over an impeccable olive green sea covered with white-caps. Up to supper time we made nearly two hundred miles. “What about your omens now?” chided George. “Wait,” he was warned. “We’re running on Eastern Standard Time. Omens always

AN ARCTIC RODEO

work on Greenwich. They're just catching up on us."

Then while some of us were indulging in an innocent game of poker after supper, the engine suddenly began to race. In one jump the Chief was in the engine room. For the next fifteen minutes it was started, reversed, stopped and speeded. Then the silence of the tomb settled over it. The Chief rejoined the game. "From now on I'm a passenger," he announced.

"What's wrong?" someone asked.

"The propeller just dropped off the schooner, took the tail shaft with it and sank to the bottom of Baffin Bay," was the answer.

The omens were vindicated. Our bad luck had overtaken us. In the twinkling of an eye we had been converted from a lavish pleasure craft into a windjammer. Now all we had to do was beat our way across the twelve hundred miles of liquid mirth that separated us from Sydney. It might take ten days. It might take two months. Boreas would decide.

This interesting event took place just south of the Arctic Circle. The geometrical form of the

AN ARCTIC RODEO

modern screw propeller is described by the dictionary as "helical"—and deserves the term.

II

Not until one has left a good home and gone voyaging on a windjammer will he appreciate to the full the subtle nuances of the word "monotony." Under those conditions the word is pregnant with meaning and packed with flavor. Neither is the utter fickleness and exquisite eccentricity that wind and weather is capable of ever thoroughly understood until it becomes a vital factor in one's life.

Day dawned to the sound of a hoarse, unsympathetic voice bawling: "All hands on deck to raise the mainsail." What might almost be termed "half a gale" had faded away to a dead calm. That day we made fifteen miles. Then the weather, for no reason at all, except capriciousness, suddenly reversed itself and the breeze freshened to half a gale again. The sea rose rapidly. It became nasty. The schooner pitched seven ways at once. Eating became a juggling trick. We drank our tea by strategy.

The night was wild. In the darkness the great

AN ARCTIC RODEO

seas bore down on us like liquid mountains. Every movable object on deck broke loose and slid to and fro. The wind howled in the rigging. It filled one with misgivings and a lively regret that he had not become a real estate salesman instead of a sailor. It was the kind of night one should cling to a ratlin and sing: "Oh, blow the man down, bullies, knock him right down. Way—Ay, blow the man down!"—but didn't. Then Dame Nature did another right about face and everything went as flat as a cheap cornet.

During the next three days the mainsail was raised and lowered forty-two times, and that comes as near completely describing our sleeping and waking activities as anything that could be said. The necessity for lowering it was always obvious; the reasons for raising it were invariably cogent.

III

Monday, September thirteenth, was a day we will never forget. It might be called a red letter day. At six A.M. we were allowed to raise the mainsail.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Some claimed they could see land ahead, which gave rise to considerable discussion, more or less of an academic nature. Mr. Squires and the Bo'swain argued the point.

Mr. Squires: "If anyone would like to have the opinion of one as knows, that's the Labrador."

Bo'swain: "I knows no place on the Labrador where one can see land dead ahead and on the starboard beam both to onct."

Billy the Cook: "Well, I'm sure of one thing. It ain't Italyland." And that settled the argument, for just then the land vanished entirely.

It was late afternoon before we saw it again. In the meantime we rolled along a couple of miles an hour like a porpoise with wooden fins. Then the Skipper got a shot at the sun, to discover we were between Cape Makkovik and Iron Bound Islands. At last we were beginning to get somewhere, for even places with names like that must be somewhere.

That night we were entertained by the Aurora Borealis.

About four a.m. the lookout suddenly saw land "too close," as he expressed it, also a couple of ice-

AN ARCTIC RODEO

bergs sprang at us out of the night. As a result we jibed, and almost tore out our sticks. All hands turned out in their socks. This jibing is a rough sport.

We passed Indian Harbor. Half a dozen fishing schooners were at anchor, taking shelter from the gale. It was our first contact with civilization. We passed Hamilton Inlet, negotiated the Bull Dog Tickle and towards evening gazed on our first lighthouse. It was a marvelous lighthouse. No watch tower guarding a remote boundary of a far flung empire ever looked more romantic.

Next came Belle Isle, lying like a blot on the horizon to the south. The breeze died down. It was decided that we would proceed through the Straits to Sydney instead of going by sea around Newfoundland to St. John's. Nobody cared.

Later in the day we counted eight houses around us all at once. It gave some of the boys a "shut-in feeling," as they expressed it.

On account of a nasty head wind we got stuck in the Straits, tacking patiently back and forth and getting nowhere. It's experiences like this that make sailors so wild when they finally get ashore.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

Twenty-four hours of sailing with our lee rail buried carried us forward fifteen miles.

Then the Skipper hove anchor in the open roadstead of Anse à Loup.

IV

When we rowed ashore we were suspected of being fish buyers for a moment, and treated with considerable deference, for the fish buyer is a personage of no mean importance in these regions where commerce rests on the solid foundation of salt codfish rather than a gold basis. A good mile of the waterfront was occupied by racks of drying cod, both split and salted.

At noon we lunched at one of the cottages on royal fare: small native potatoes boiled, boiled cod, boiled cabbage, salt pork, tea, bread, biscuit and preserved mooseberries. The memory lingers. The cottage was meticulously clean and simply furnished, except for cheap lace curtains at the windows and lithographs of Biblical scenes not at all conspicuous for their cheerfulness.

The men and women of the family were kindness personified, though in the case of our hostess, for

AN ARCTIC RODEO

obvious reasons, it was a toothless friendliness tempered with what might be termed a red-gummed warm-heartedness. Yet no one could have been more attentive. For fear of missing a single crumb of gossip, whenever she made a round trip to the stove it was performed at a dog trot.

We enquired about Doctor Grenfell. Her eyes lit up. "Yes, indeed," she confided, "he was in here no more'n a few days ago. He's a fine man. But as a Doctor, something of a disappointment. Why, here I be sick to death an' fit for nothin'—" she interrupted herself long enough to make a quick dash to the stove and back for the dish of cabbage—"and do you suppose he'd give me any med'cin'? Not him. All he said was: 'Jus' forgit your health an' you'll notice a big improvement.' What's the use of a Doctor that don't give pills?" It was hard to explain.

Later some of us followed the path along the edge of the sea, with a view to walking off a few surplus calories. A short distance from the village we caught up with a small skinny urchin, who beguiled his journey by sporadic attacks on the berry bushes that lined the path. He joined us at once,

AN ARCTIC RODEO

and after a few casual inquiries of a distinctly personal nature, plunged without more ado into a series of horror tales that made our blood run cold. He was an orphan. His father'd been drowned. His mother died of consumption. He lived with a sick uncle. His uncle had consumption too. Last summer a schooner went down in a gale right in sight of the village. Two men were drowned. Their families stood on shore and watched.

The information was delivered in a strident, dramatic treble. We were obviously supposed to be at once entertained and impressed. A little ways to the south lay the wrecks of two large steamers. The vivid recital of their destruction was absolutely terrifying. As they lay in the boiling surf, on the point of breaking up, one of the doomed men announced his intention of attempting to carry a line ashore: "If you move," said the Captain, "I'll shoot you in your tracks." There was a moment's silence. Then: "If you want to shoot anyone, shoot me," cried the man's brother, and dove into the Hell-broth. He was never seen again. It was dandy.

There was only one survivor. "My father gave

AN ARCTIC RODEO

him a coat that had never been on anyone's back before," the boy remarked proudly, and the single sentence told a whole story of stark poverty. Clothes that had never been worn before! And given away to a shipwrecked sailor! "There is a nobility without heraldry," says Thomas Browne. Some claim spread eagles in a field d'or, but if heraldry were guided by reason, in this case at any rate, a codfish, split and salted on a field of barren rock, would express every bit as much gentility.

"There were more survivors from the other wreck," the boy ambled on. "My father gave them twenty-five packets of 'shag.' "

"You should be proud of such a father," someone remarked.

"He was one of the best men on the Labrador," the boy replied, and then continued irrelevantly: "There were money belts on lots of the drowned sailors, but most were drowned in their bunks, so not many washed ashore—"

"Have you ever been to St. John's?" we enquired, in an effort to avert another sea disaster.

"No," he answered. "I've heard tell of St.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

John's, but I've never been there, and I guess I'll never go. Anse à Loup is good enough for me." We came to the top of a hill; below, at a small settlement, they were spreading salt fish in the sun. "Well, I guess I'm late," said the boy. "I've gotta go." And he scuttled away as fast as his thin legs would carry him.

At the edge of the small cluster of houses we came on the boy's uncle. There was no mistaking him. He lay in a wheelbarrow, from which his arms and legs grotesquely dangled. He had been trundled a few hundred feet along the path and left in the sun. All able-bodied men this day were spreading codfish.

The wind veered to the north—a favorable omen, so we hurried back to the schooner. The Doc went off in the boat with us. His usual gaiety was conspicuous by its absence. He had just come from a professional visit to a young mother who had given birth to her fifth child three days previous. Everything that could go wrong on such an occasion had done so. The midwife had hands like septic hams. Blood poisoning had set in and soon four more orphans would be living with uncles and aunts.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

It was a relief to heave anchor at four-thirty. We made a dashing exit from the narrow roadstead, then pitched and tossed all night while the breeze died away to a whisper. By morning the tide had robbed us of what little progress we had made, and even thrown us for a slight loss.

v

For three days we hardly budged. Then a roaring gale came out of the north and blew us through the Straits like a cork out of a bottle. The foresail was double reefed. Everything else was lowered and made fast. The skylights were covered; the hatches battened down and the dank interior of the schooner became a torture chamber. It was stifling. Sleep became merely an abstract idea. No one could discover a method of wedging himself into his bunk so he would stay, with the result that after he was tossed to the floor once or twice he put on his oilskins and clung to something on deck. At the end of twenty-four hours a good many civilians were in a state where they couldn't eat, couldn't sleep and couldn't stay awake.

AN ARCTIC RODEO

We wove past St. Paul's Island, staggered across Cabot Strait and rolled by Cape North. The ore boats we now passed, heading for the St. Lawrence, were taking green seas over their bows. Sydney was only forty-five miles away. Cape Smoke came and went. Everyone gathered on deck and employed intricate mathematics figuring out the moment of our probable arrival.

The sun set with sophisticated nonchalance. A limpid full moon rose with just the trace of a leer on its pale face. Our chain rattled out and we rode quietly at anchor in the harbor of North Sydney.

Custom regulations prevented our going ashore. Yet in the twinkle of an eye a robust supply of rum mysteriously crept into the forecastle. With a certainty that is absolutely dependable rum will always find a sailor. And now the crew settled down to a few hours of bibulous delight. By midnight they were so foxed with liquor their only idea was to see how much noise they could make, regardless of quality, so that the Mate intruded with the suggestion that they pipe down. He might better have thrown a lighted match into loose powder, for the forecastle it seems is the sailor's

AN ARCTIC RODEO

sanctuary and in entering it uninvited he had committed a gross breach of nautical etiquette.

It took but a few more shots—or rather broadsides—of rum to convince the men that he had not only invaded their rights, but was guilty of “a nuisance,” of “unlawful assembly” and “attempted culpable homicide.” Convinced of this beyond all reasonable doubt Sailor Jim now elected himself a committee of one to avenge the insult. First, he stripped for action. This consisted in tearing his shirt off in three pieces and removing his under-shirt in large handfuls. Then “like a shot off a shovel” he started looking for the Mate.

The Mate was about six feet three. So was Jim. At this point the similarity ceased. Jim was advanced in liquor to the point of insanity. The Mate was as cool as the lifelong use of cold water could make him. Someone was going to be murdered. They circled around the deck in the moonlight with motives diametrically opposed; the Mate intent on avoiding the issue, Jim intent on joining it. As he crept half-naked toward the after-cabin with an iron belaying pin in his hand, he unexpectedly stumbled over the Cowboy, who had been

AN ARCTIC RODEO

occupying himself gazing at the moon—as cowboys do at times. There was no murder.

As the Cowboy said afterward: “I could have done one of two things at that moment. Hit him over the head with a crowbar, or sung to him like they do to quiet lunatics. But there wasn’t any crowbar handy, and I didn’t feel like singing, so I didn’t do either. I just engaged him in polite conversation and eased him back toward the forecastle hatch.” And so he had. Inch by inch the Sailor had retreated under the cool, eloquence of the Cowboy. He reached the hatch, paused a tense moment with eyes a-glitter in the silvery light and finally sinking through it vanished like a bad dream.

The Cowboy followed. A little more conversation, the various commas, semicolons and periods of which were celebrated by a jolt of rum, and Jim fell forward unconscious on the galley table. It was a sailor’s homecoming.

At daylight Jim stuck his head down the after companionway and resigned. Later in the morning he was handed \$140 and his fare back to St. John’s; the financial results of a summer’s work.

In a telegram of three thousand words to the

AN ARCTIC RODEO

New York *Times* George broke his story about the Arctic murder of Ross Marvin. The local operator was led home with a bad case of digital St. Vitus' dance, but she was not sacrificed in vain, for the story got eleven columns in the *Times* and started a controversy that lasted for weeks.

Finally, under the persuasive influence of a brand-new propeller, we slid rapidly down the parallels of latitude. Once more the landmarks became familiar; Cape Commandiere, Cape Sable, the Gulf of Maine. Some very lovely sunsets left their spell on us, while one night we cut our way across a mirror-like sea sown with countless stars. There were twice as many as one usually has to reckon with; those that scintillated above, infinite in numbers, and the distorted counterparts that twinkled back at them.

The last day of September found us crossing Georges Banks. So many fishing schooners were scattered about it looked like a regatta. We tried to hail one to get the bearing of the Pollack Rip Lightship, but as soon as we turned in his direction he started his engine and took to his heels. At the same time eighteen or twenty very hard looking

AN ARCTIC RODEO

characters tumbled up from below. There was no doubt about our being home now. We were in the midst of the rum fleet, but we looked so tough they all took us for hi-jackers. This was disconcerting. Yet they could hardly be blamed. We were streaked like a zebra with rust and dirt, our sails had gone into deep mourning, our rigging was full of odds and ends from bird carcasses to kayaks, while our decks were invisible under their load of empty drums, dories, bears, and tanks full of cadavers.

At length we managed to get within hailing distance of a schooner. Pollack Rip was dead ahead. Again we were on our way. Porpoise played about us. A steamer pushed her bluff nose northward, so light in ballast that her half-exposed screw thrashed the water angrily. A small, highly powdered ketch ran alongside us to relieve its curiosity, then cut across our bows and missed our bowsprit by a matter of inches. We had left the wide-open spaces behind us.

Soon we were off the yellow sand spits that clothe the tip of Cape Cod. Monomoy Point and

AN ARCTIC RODEO

the Stone Horse Lightship dropped astern. Then we suddenly found ourselves looking down the muzzle of a rapid-fire gun mounted on a Coast Guard Patrol Boat.

Our engine was ordered shut off. The patrol boat came up against our stern in such a position she could rake us, yet avoid any broadside we might be contemplating. It was cleverly done. Two heavily armed officers sprang aboard, demanded our papers and searched us for liquor. Now we knew we had definitely reached civilization! All summer we had lived among people who were absolutely lawless. Consequently, having no laws, they broke none. A man didn't even have to obey the law of gravity if he didn't care to—though he usually found it advisable. After untrammeled independence it is hard to get used to having strangers take such an interest in one's welfare. Nothing more pernicious than formaldehyde was discovered so we were allowed to proceed. "Thank Heaven that's over," said the Skipper, quite flushed in the face.

For a while we bowled along quite handsomely, then just off the Handkerchief Lightship, at the

AN ARCTIC RODEO

point of an exceedingly careless looking cannon, we were requested to "heave to." Our papers were examined. We were searched for liquor. Not even a raisin or cake of yeast was found, so we were allowed to proceed. "Thank Heaven that's over," said the Skipper, quite reddish about the jowls.

It was a beautiful afternoon. We stood idly in the warm sunshine watching the ships come and go, when just off West Chop we were persuaded to stop for a moment. The instrument of persuasion employed was a beautifully polished gatling gun. We decided we might as well pause momentarily. Our papers were examined. We were searched for liquor. No mash, mush or ferment of any description was found, so we were allowed to proceed. "Thank Heaven that's over," said the Skipper, his face suffused with a purple glow.

We passed Cross Rip Light and the Hedge Fence.

Night fell. Brightly lighted Sound steamers flitted past. Billy the Cook emerged from the galley carrying a pan of boiled potatoes. Without comment he dumped them into the cage of the young bears. Below the horizon to the south, a

AN ARCTIC RODEO

glow—or what we took to be a glow—suffuse the sky.

“I didn’t know you got the Northern Lights down here,” he muttered.

“We don’t,” volunteered the Taxidermist. “Those are only the White Lights of Broadway and Forty-second Street.”

Our Arctic Rodeo was over.



UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY



115 186

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY